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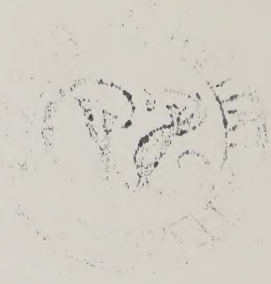

FIVE HUNDRED

SKETCHES AND SKELETONS

OF

SERMONS,

SUITED FOR ALL OCCASIONS;

INCLUDING

NEARLY ONE HUNDRED ON TYPES AND METAPHORS

BY THE

AUTHOR OF "THE PULPIT CYCLOPÆDIA," &c

FROM THE SIXTH ENGLISH EDITION

FIVE VOLUMES COMPLETE IN ONE.

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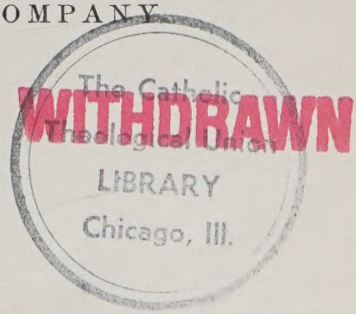

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PREFACE.

These Sketches and Skeletons are the verbatim outlines of Sermons which have been delivered to a congregation in London, and several of them have been preached on particular occasions, both in North and South Britain. The Author has ever been desirous of keeping prominently before him the edification of his hearers; and he has sought to effect this, by trying to use great plainness of speech. It has long been his settled conviction that fine preaching is neither calculated to honor God, nor prove saving to souls. He conceives to preach usefully ought to be the ambition of every man of God, and that every thing else can but be of secondary importance To effect this, a suitable portion of Scripture should be chosen, clearly explained, and powerfully urged upon the hearts of the hearers.

He may just say, for the information of those who desire to excel in usefulness, that he has gained indescribable advantages from perusing the Puritan and the Nonconformist Divines, and believes no one can be familiar with Bishop Hall, Bolton, Sibbs, Caryl, Manton, Baxter, and Howe, without being more eminently qualified to labor in the vineyard of Christ. He has also found great benefit from an acquaintance with the writings of Leighton Henry, Evans, Grove, Barrow, Bishop Beveridge; and, among the moderns, he is ardently attached to the sermons of Stennett, R. Robinson, Belfrage, Lavington, Dr. Wardlaw, Jay, and C. Bradley; and he feels confident that these works will be read by thousands so long as evangelical piety shall have any place in our land.

The word of God furnishes the Christian minister with an endless variety of subjects; and it is only by keeping up this varied mode of address, that congregations can long be instructed and edified. Works that suggest numerous topics, and throw some little light upon them, are certainly calculated to assist the Christian minister, especially that large and worthy class of men whose time for reading and study is of the most limited description. Ministers who have obtained the inglorious reputation of preaching the sermons of others, will never avail themselves of Sketches and Outlines, as they require considerable thought and labor in filling them up; but they are generally persons who possess to a prodigious degree the faculty of committing words to memory; and hence they revel among the splendid sermons of the day, and find it necessary to use all—from the first word of the introduction, to the last in the application,—lest their own meagerness of thought and poverty of expression should be made manifest.

In regard to the unfavorable opinion many entertain of the value of volumes like the present, it may be said with truth, that Outlines of Sermons are not designed to render ministerial study and preparation for the pulpit unnecessary; but to suggest a variety of topics to the preacher, and aid him more efficiently in

making arrangements for his work. It is thus that architectural designs and plans are studied, by those entering upon that profession. And it is thus, too, that works of science and art are intended to help those who are practically following such pursuits. Such a use will never produce mental indolence, or place the minister of the gospel in the equivocal light of a mere borrower and retailer of the thoughts of others. Common honesty requires that men deliver their own discourses, unless they intimate the contrary to their audience. Yet, in doing this, they have an unalienable right to consult every author calculated to give them information or assistance in their work.

From the extensive patronage which the volumes of Sketches and Skeletons have received, the author has been induced to prepare a volume limited to typical and metaphorical topics. He is aware that these subjects have been very extensively abused, and that many persons attach an overweening importance to every thing of an allegorical or figurative character. This, however, can be no reason why we should neglect those beautiful types and similitudes which occupy so very prominent a place in the divine word.

The author has not attempted either a critical analysis, or a general exposition, of all the subjects which might be considered typical or figurative, but has selected those which appeared to him most interesting, and adapted for real usefulness to the general class of hearers. The profit of our auditory should ever be first,—ever pre-eminent. Compared with this, every thing else is trifling and unimportant.

ADVERTISEMENT TO THE AMERICAN EDITION.

The present volume is a reprint entire of the five volumes of the English edition published under the titles of *Four hundred Sketches and Skeletons of Sermons*, in four volumes, and *Sketches of Sermons on Types and Metaphors*, in one volume. The preceding work of the same author, "The Pulpit Cyclopædia," issued uniform with this volume, having passed through many editions, and highly commended by the various denominations of Christian ministers, the publishers are induced to offer the present, which in Europe has enjoyed still greater popularity.

It is proper for the publishers to add, that this publication differs altogether from a work reprinted in Philadelphia under the title of "Four hundred Sketches of Sermons by ministers of various denominations" no portion of the present volume has before appeared in this country

New York, Nov. 1, 1846

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SKETCHES, &c.

SKETCH I.

THE ONLY FOUNDATION

"For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ."—1 *Cor.* iii. 11.

THE divisions of Christianity originated at Corinth. It was here that professed believers began to classify and arrange themselves under human leaders, and to assume human distinctions in religion. One said, 'I am of Paul;" another, "I am of Apollos; I am of Cephas," &c. The apostle, in this epistle, especially in the first three chapters, strongly discountenances this course of procedure; shows its carnality; reminds them that all these are the servants of the same Lord, preach the same gospel, are not divided, much less opposed to each other; that there is but one true and saving foundation: "For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." Let us consider,

1. *Christ as a foundation.*

The term is architectural, and refers to that which is the lowest part of a building, and on which the whole structure rests. It is often employed, however, to denote the beginning of any thing, and sometimes the essential principle of any system. In our text it may be considered applicable to each or the whole of these significations. The church is a spiritual edifice, and Jesus is the foundation stone, as well as the head of the corner. Redemption is a dispensation of grace and mercy to man; of that dispensation Jesus Christ is the beginning. Christianity is a system of truth: of that system Christ is both the centre and the essential principle.

1. Christ is the foundation of the gospel.

The gospel is emphatically the gospel of Jesus Christ. He is its founder, source, subject, and glory. All the doctrines of the gospel, all its privileges, all its blessings, are from him, and from him only. All its ordinances bear his name, and all its light and glory emanate from him.

2. Christ is the foundation of a sinner's acceptance with God.

He is the only way of access to God. He is the one Mediator—the true propitiatory, or mercy-seat. We are justified by faith in him, and are accepted in the Beloved. "We have redemption in his blood, even the forgiveness of sin."

3. Christ is the foundation of a believer's hope.

The Christian is begotten to a lively hope; but it is by the resurrection of Christ from the dead; 1 Peter i. 3. Christ is in him, the hope of glory; Col i. 27. The believer's hopes relate to full and complete salvation—victory in death—an entrance into the kingdom of glory—resurrection from the dead, in the likeness of Christ—and eternal bliss in the presence of God forever. But all these grand and sublime hopes rest on the Saviour. We conquer through him; die happy only in him; are admitted into paradise by him; shall be raised by his power, and have eternal life flowing from him.

4. Christ is the foundation of the whole church.

Peter confessed his glorious and divine character—affirmed that he was the Son of the living God. "And on this rock, (this true and stable confession,) will I build my church, and the gates of hell shall never prevail against it." "He is Head over all things to his church;" "Alpha and Omega;" and "all and in all;" Isaiah xxviii. 16.

Notice.

II. *The distinguishing characteristics of this foundation.*

It is distinguished,

1. For its strength.

And this is of the utmost importance in a foundation. Were it frail and yielding, the safety of the building would be endangered. "If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?" Psalm xi. 3. But this foundation is Omnipotence itself. "The Lord is a rock; and his way is perfect." He possesses all power both in heaven and on earth. He is both "the wisdom and power of God." It is distinguished,

2. For its suitability.

It is so to Deity—every way worthy of him, in which all his perfections are most gloriously displayed. Worthy of his wisdom, truth, holiness, justice, &c.

> "Here the whole Deity is known,
> Nor dares the creature guess
> Which of the glories brightest shone,
> The justice or the grace"

It is also suitable to the sinner—exactly adapted to his state and circumstances. Here is mercy brought down to a level with his condition. Here is all his need, and all within his grasp—

> "A balsam for his every wound;
> All, all he wants is here."

It is also distinguished,

3. For its perpetuity.

It is not affected by the changes of the times, or by the revolutions of the kingdoms of this world. It is through perpetual ages invariably the same. It is the only foundation which the righteous have ever had to build upon. It is the only one on which all the saved to the end of the world must rest. Patriarchs, prophets, apostles, martyrs, confessors, &c., have all built on this foundation. And there is inscribed upon it, "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and forever."

III. *The folly and impiety of attempting to lay any other foundation than that is laid.*

The text supposes that men would attempt this, and affirms the impossibility of effecting it. And the history of the church amply bears out this supposition. How many false foundations have been laid, and embellished, to attract and draw men from the only Saviour of sinners! What mixtures of hay, straw, and stubble!

In what way do men attempt to lay another foundation?

1. By trusting alone to the dictates of unsanctified reason.

What havoc have these luminaries of nature made among the spiritual doctrines of the cross!—un-deified the Saviour; extinguished the Holy Spirit; frittered away the atonement; made Satan and Satanic agency a visionary illusion; placed a cold repentance, and a lifeless faith, and a spiritless morality, as the basis of salvation. We find it impossible to exclude such from being of those who lay another foundation. This is done,

2. By relying on our own righteousness for acceptance with God.

This may be done in a thousand ways and forms. By trusting to our honesty, or to the absence of notorious and flagrant crimes, acts of generosity, of devotion, of self-denial, of correctness of creed, of public profession. All these things are well in their own place, but absolutely worthless as our soul's foundation; "for by the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified." Rom. iii. 20–28; 2 Tim. i. 9; Tit iii. 5. This is done,

3. When we rest solely on God's mercy to the exclusion of the Saviour's merits.

It is a glorious truth that God is merciful; but it is in the provision, by and through Jesus, that this mercy is most strikingly manifested; therefore the rejecter of Jesus despises the brightest display of this divine perfection. Besides, Jehovah is just, and holy, and true; and he has asserted that the unbeliever shall inevitably perish. John iii. 18; 1 John v. 10.

The folly and criminality of attempting to lay any other foundation will appear when we reflect on,

1. The sufficiency of the one laid.

He is able to save all; and all to the uttermost. He is the Saviour of all men, especially of them who believe. He wills the salvation of the chief of sinners. He never rejected any humble suppliant. All who have come to him have been received, and in nowise did he ever cast them out. How foolish and wicked to reject this foundation!

2. It is to reflect on Jehovah's wisdom and goodness, and on Christ's sufficiency to save.

This foundation is identified with the depths of infinite skill; with the boundlessness of divine love; with the unspeakable preciousness of Christ's blood. To

attempt to lay another is to set at naught these perfections of Deity, and to trample under foot the blood of Jesus. It is the exaltation of self-device and self-sufficiency above God and his Son Jesus Christ.

3. It is to involve the soul in remediless wo, by the rejection of the only Saviour.

He who rejects the light of life must dwell in darkness. He who rejects the one Saviour perishes necessarily and virtually by his obstinacy and crime. There is no other Saviour—no other refuge—no other remedy. He is the life of the world; to reject him is to be guilty of our own soul's blood, and to go down to the pit by the stroke of our own suicidal hand.

APPLICATION

Learn,

1. The invaluableness of the gospel foundation. Sinner, come to it; build upon it. Believer, rest with assured confidence upon it. It can never fail; all is secure here.

2. Necessity of a personal acquaintance with it. Religion is a matter of experience as well as theory. The heart must be right as well as the head. The foundation must be beneath us. Let us,

3. Guard against any thing having Christ's place. Our motto must be Jesus always,—Jesus only—Jesus forever.

SKETCH II.

THE CHRISTIAN INVITATION.

"We are journeying to the place of which the Lord said, I will give it you. Come thou with us, and we will do thee good; for the Lord hath spoken good concerning Israel."—*Numb.* x. 29.

The religion of the Bible is a perfect transcript of the Divine Mind; being holy, just, and good. It is holy in its nature, just in its practice, and good in its influence. There will be the spirit of purity, the practice of righteousness, and the diffusion of goodness. To do good is the truest pleasure and the highest dignity of which the human mind is capable. The sphere of goodness is exceedingly extensive. There are multitudes of objects on whom it may be usefully and satisfactorily expended. The poor, the fatherless, widows orphans, the sick, &c. are all fit objects of Christian compassion. While these ought not to be forgotten, there are others whose poverty and wretchedness is of a mental and moral description, whose claims are of the first importance. To feed the hungry mind—to instruct the spiritually dark—to win souls to God—is the highest wisdom and the truest goodness. The text exhibits to our view one way in which we ought to attempt to effec this great object; by kindly inviting those around us to accompany us to the heavenly Zion. Notice,

1. *God's people are travelling to the celestial Canaan*

"We are journeying to the place," &c Two things deserve notice: The Journey And, The Place to which they are Journeying.

1. The journey.

(1) The journey commences in the day of conversion. It is then that the course of sin and misery is abandoned; that the back is turned upon the City of Destruction; that the mind is changed, old things passing away, and all things becoming new; the whole state completely reversed.

(2) This journey is continued by the soul advancing in the knowledge and love of God;—by the mortifying of the flesh, and the continual crucifixion of the old man with his deeds; by diligence in the spiritual calling; by following the footsteps of the Great Exemplar, and growing daily in the spirit and mind of Christ. This journey can only be continued by self-denial, labor, and perseverance in the things of God.

(3) This journey terminates at death. This is the end of the race—the close of the day—the conclusion of the warfare. "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life;" Rev ii. 10. It is at death that those who are in the Lord rest from their labors. Notice,

2. The place to which they are journeying.

This is the celestial Canaan; which is,

(1) A land of rest. So was Canaan of old to the Israelites. In the wilderness they had toils, and fatigue, and drought, and enemies; but in Canaan they possessed the promised rest. In this life the believer has a rest; for "we who believe do enter into rest." This is a rest from the drudgery of sin, from the slavery of

he devil from distressing fears and apprehensions of divine wrath. But the present rest is not perfect; it is often interrupted and disturbed; but there remaineth a rest full, free, complete, and eternal, for the people of God. To this final rest they are tending, and in Canaan this glorious rest shall be enjoyed. It is

(2) A land of riches and prosperity. "For the Lord thy God bringeth thee into a good land, a land of brooks of waters, of fountains and depths that spring out of valleys and hills; a land of wheat, and barley, and vines, and pomegranates; a land of oil, olives, and honey; a land wherein thou shalt eat bread without scarceness," &c. Deut. viii. 7; vi. 10. This is but a faint emblem of the heavenly Canaan. There is the tree of life ever bearing its immortal fruit. There is the river of life, clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and the Lamb. There is the unbeclouded sky—the never-setting sun; fulness of joys, and pleasures for evermore. Rev. xxi. 10, &c.; xxii. 1–7.

(3) A land prepared for and promised to God's spiritual Israel. The former Canaan was prepared for and bestowed upon the believing posterity of Abraham. So all who possess the faith of Abraham, and are thus his spiritual seed, shall inherit the Canaan above Heaven is prepared for such, promised to such, and such shall inherit it forever. "Fear not, little flock," &c. Luke xii. 32; 1 Peter i. 2, 3; James i. 12; Rev. xxi 27.

Observe,

II. *God's People feel it their duty to invite others to journey with them to the Promised Land.*

Hence they say, "Come thou with us," &c. This implies,

1. That there are many who are not in the way to this goodly land.

This is obvious both from Scripture and observation. "World lieth in wickedness." 'Wide is the gate, and broad is the way," &c. Many nations; many of our own country; many in our own neighborhoods; many of our relatives and friends. It implies,

2. That there is room and freedom for more in the way to heaven.

It is said the way is narrow, but that refers only to character, too narrow to admit the least indulged sin; but in point of room, wide enough for the whole world Yes, after all who have set out for Zion there is yet room for more. The Spirit and bride say, Come; and all that will may come, and take of the water of life freely. And the Saviour says, "He that cometh unto me I will in nowise cast out." See also Isai. i. 18; lv. 1; Ezek. xxxiii. 11; Rom. x. 13. It implies,

3. That God's people are anxious that others should join them in their way to heaven.

In trade men are often envious, and try to monopolize; not so in grace. The believer does not wish to go to heaven alone he knows that in breaking the bread of life to others, it is multiplied in his hands; and the more he gives, the more is left for himself. In watering he is watered; in blessing he is blessed; and,

> "The more comes in with free good will,
> Makes the banquet sweeter still."

He has learned the valuableness of souls, the greatness of the gospel salvation, and therefore he desires that these souls should enjoy this salvation, and be delivered from the wrath to come.

4. God's people use their influence to prevail with those around them to accompany them to heaven.

They invite them, saying, Come with us! They practically invite them, by amiableness of disposition, sweetness of temper righteousness of life; and thus allure them by the excellencies they manifest, and constrain them to glorify our Father who is in heaven.

Observe,

III. *That God's People have good reasons to assign why those around should go with them to the goodly Land.*

The reasons in the text are two: "We will do you good;" and, "The Lord hath spoken good concerning Israel." The first is a human reason and therefore limited The second is a divine reason, and unlimited.

1. There is the promise of benevolent help.

"We will do you good." Every human being may do much good or much evil The Christian may do the sinner much good by his instructions—showing to him the way of God more perfectly; by his kindly encouragements; by his attractive example, and by his spiritual influence He may take him by the hand, and pray

that God may grant him the blessings of his efficient help and grace.

What good Jacob did to Laban—Abraham to Abimelech—Moses to the Israelites, &c.!

2. There is the good declaration of God concerning Israel.

"The Lord hath spoken good." What has he not said? Has he not given the most precious promises and the most gracious assurances? Is he not the sun and shield of his people? He has promised to give grace and glory, and to withhold no good thing. He has said he will guide, support, protect, and keep to eternal life: that he will bestow peace and joy, and finally confer upon his saints "a crown of glory that fadeth not away." And what he hath spoken shall assuredly come to pass, not one word shall fail of all the good the Lord hath spoken.

APPLICATION.

Learn,

1. The present state of God's people. It is a journeying state. They are now pilgrims and strangers on the earth: this is the time of their toil and suffering.

2. The happiness of God's people. Children of God, heirs of eternal life, expectants of the glory that shall be revealed.

3. The true wisdom of those who are without. To accompany God's people on their heavenly pilgrimage. Those who walk with wise men shall be wise—and with believers shall be saved. Sinners, delay not to join Zion's travellers; reply to their benevolent invitations by saying, "We will go with you, for we perceive that God is with you."

SKETCH III.

GOD'S OWN CAUSE

"Arise, O God, plead thine own cause."—*Psal.* lxxiv. 22.

PRAYER is the atmosphere the Christian breathes; no more can he do without it, and retain his spiritual life, than the body can exist without the common air. He has many, very many, inducements to this holy exercise. He has many wants to be supplied, many enemies to overcome, many duties to perform; and strength for these is only obtained by offering believing prayer to God, who is the only source of our help, and the Father of all our mercies.

The Christian, therefore, feels the importance of prayer, and prays for himself; but he likewise prays for others. He necessarily feels interested in the happiness and salvation of his kindred and friends: he will feel concerned that these should partake of the love of God in Christ, and be joint-heirs with himself of the grace of life. He not only prays for himself and his friends according to the flesh, but he likewise feels deeply concerned in the affairs of Zion, and for her welfare and prosperity he presents his supplication to God. Sooner would he that his right hand should forget its cunning, than he should forget Jerusalem, or that she should ever cease to be his chief joy. The breathings of his soul are, "Build up the walls of Jerusalem." "Save now, I beseech thee send now prosperity!" "Arise, O God plead thine own cause."

Let us consider, I. The Cause specified—"Thine own cause." And, II. The Prayer presented—"Arise, O God, plead thine own cause."

I. *The Cause specified.*

The cause specified is the cause of God's holy church; the cause identified with the interests of redeeming love; the cause which is significantly set forth in the New Testament under the appellations—kingdom of God, kingdom of heaven, kingdom of righteousness. It is that spiritual dispensation, of which Jesus is the head, of which believers are the subjects, and which is destined to overthrow the works of darkness in the earth, and to fill the whole world with the knowledge and glory of God. This cause is distinguished,

1. For its divinity; it is God's own cause.

The result of his infinite skill, the production of his almighty power, and the effect of his unsearchable grace. It is the cause of his eternal counsels and purposes: it is the cause of his right arm; it is the cause of his unbounded mercy and love. Viewed as a kingdom, he is its legitimate sovereign; as a nation, he is its only ruler; as a family, he is its father and head.

2. It is a cause of righteousness

Its founder is the righteous Jehovah I originated in righteousness. It was of

fected by the righteousness of Messiah, and by his bearing in himself the just demerit of unrighteousness, that, by suffering the just for the unjust, he might bring us to God. Its principles and doctrines are all righteous; and it impresses the righteous image of God on the heart of man, and makes the life holy and unblameable in his sight.

3. It is a benevolent cause.

Its designs are truly philanthropic. It presents a true and full remedy for all the ills of humanity; it elevates the soul from the deepest debasement to celestial dignity; it delivers the mind from the thraldom and slavery of vice, into the liberty of the children of God; it takes away from the lip the cup of divine displeasure, and presents the cup of blessing, of happiness, and of salvation; it promotes the real benefit of man, both in this world and in that which is to come; it is not only a blessing to mankind, but it makes man a blessing to his fellow; it is, in short, the light, the life, and the happiness of the world; it breathes out "glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, and good will toward men."

4. It is distinguished for its unity.

It is emphatically *one*. It has been presented to the world in various dispensations: there have been the patriarchal, the Mosaic, the prophetical, and the gospel; but all have been based on one central foundation, the whole of these dispensations have formed but one day.

It has been distinguished by divers names, and has been presented to our view under various forms; but still there is only one Lord, one faith, one church, one baptism. Christ has but one flock, and one fold, one spiritual kingdom, one army; and all his people are journeying one way to the only true rest "which remaineth for the people of God."

Having noticed the cause specified, we proceed to consider

II. *The Prayer presented.*

1. This prayer implies that God's cause is opposed

And facts fully bear out this truth. It has been opposed in every age of the world; Cain opposed it in the days of Abel; the antediluvians opposed it in the days of Noah; the wicked inhabitants of the cities opposed it in the days of Lot; the idolatrous nations opposed it in the days of the prophets; the Jews opposed it in the days of Christ; the philosophizing Greeks and barbarous pagans opposed it in the days of the apostles. Mahommedans, infidels, and false-hearted friends, and the men of this world, have opposed and do oppose it, even until now. It is opposed, too, by the "prince of the power of the air," and by those numerous legions of spirits of crime

> "Who throng the air, and darken heaven,
> And crowd this lower world."

2. This prayer implies that this cause depends upon God, and not upon man, for success. "Arise, O God," &c.

A moment's reflection upon its enemies is sufficient to establish this sentiment. All merely human resources must of necessity fail: human knowledge, learning, riches, eloquence, and genius would be alike unavailing: it requires almighty power to shield it; an all-wise Deity to direct it; an omniscient eye to watch it; and an ever-flowing fountain to supply its wants. "It is not by might or power, but by my Spirit," saith the Lord of hosts.

3. It implies that, notwithstanding its dependence upon God, he expects his people would intercede in its behalf

He expects this from his people on account of their great obligations to it, on account of their professed attachment to it, and on account of the inseparable connection between Zion's prosperity and their own happiness; and the people of God have ever displayed their love to God's cause by offering up prayers in its behalf. What striking examples are before us in Moses, Abraham, David, Jeremiah, and in the blessed Redeemer and his apostles! And God has laid this upon the hearts of his people, and has enforced it by royal authority, and sanctioned it by divine promise—"Pray for the peace of Jerusalem, for they that love her shall prosper."

And in what way does God regard the prayers of his servants on behalf of his cause? How does he answer their requests?

(1) Sometimes he does this by striking interpositions of his providence. See how he interposed on behalf of Israel of old, in Egypt—at the Red Sea—in their conflicts with the nations. See how he did this in the days of Haman, of Nehemiah, of Daniel; how he did this in the case of Peter when delivered from prison and death; how he did this in the days of

the reformation; how often, when floods have surrounded her, and storms beat upon her, and threatened her entire destruction, he has arisen, and said to the unruly elements, "Be still!"—and immediately there has been a great calm.

(2) He answers this prayer by raising up useful instruments for his work. In this way he raised up Moses, and brought him from tending his flocks, to be the deliverer of Israel. In this way he raised up Joshua, Gideon, Jephtha, David, and Cyrus. For this was Jeremiah sanctified in the womb, and for this was Paul elected to be an apostle, that he might make known among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ.

(3) He pleads his own cause by pouring out his Spirit upon the means his servants employ. It was in this way that the first preachers of the cross were qualified for going forth to proclaim with success the gospel of the grace of God. And it was this that caused the planting of Paul and the watering of Apollos to succeed—for he that planteth is nothing, nor he that watereth, but God who giveth the increase. The weapons of our warfare are only effectual through God, to the pulling down of strong holds. The gospel is the power of God, not the power of eloquence or human influence, to every one that believeth. It is his heavenly rain that mollifies the earth, and prepares it for vegetating, and bringing forth fruit, thirty, sixty, and an hundred fold.

APPLICATION.

There are three classes of characters, and each are differently affected in respect of God's own cause. We address a word to each.

1. Some hate it. If possible they would annihilate it; all their powers are directed against it; they libel it, they sneer at it, they profess to disbelieve it. How wicked and reckless is such a state! What folly to persist in such a course! Who hath hardened himself against Jehovah and prospered? Can they hope to succeed? As soon might they quench the orb of day, or drive back the chariot wheels of the queen of night! To such we say: Awake, awake to your true state, and immediately escape with all earnestness to that mercy which, in spite of all your infidelity and blasphemy, has provided salvation for you

2. Some care nothing about it. They care how they shall eat, and drink, and be clothed; they care for their health, and character, and business, and families; but they are careless about God's holy and blessed cause. How thoughtless! how ungrateful! how infatuated! To undervalue the precious blood of Christ! to despise the richest boon of heaven! to trifle with all that is sacred in time, and solemn in eternity! To such we say: "Consider your ways, and be wise." "To-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts."

3. Some love the cause of God, and they manifest it in various ways. They are found in its ordinances; they rally round its standard; they speak of it and for it; they give it all their influence; and their joys or sorrows abound as it is in circumstances of prosperity or adversity. To such we give words of consolation. God will not forget their work of faith, their patience of hope, and their labor of love. On such we press our text and would exhort them, in every time of trouble or calamity, to employ the prayer of the text: "Arise O God, and plead thine own cause."

To the King immortal and invisible, the only-wise God, whose throne is everlasting, and whose kingdom ruleth over all, be glory in the church, through Jesus Christ. Amen.

SKETCH IV

THE IMPORTANT QUESTION

"Dost thou believe on the Son of God?"
John ix. 35.

INTRODUCTION.—Miraculous cure of the man born blind—Malice and envy of the chief priests and rulers—The fear and duplicity of the parents—The honesty of the man himself—His expulsion from the synagogue—Being found of Christ, and the important question proposed: "Dost thou believe on the Son of God?"

Let us consider,

I. *The Question urged.*

1. The question refers to Christ as the Son of God.

The appellation, Son of God, is applied in Scripture both to angels and to men

Angels are so called; Job xxxviii. 7. Believers are frequently represented as such: "To as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God." John i. 12; Rom. viii. 14; 1 John iii. 2.

Angels are the sons of God by creation; believers so by adoption and regeneration; but Christ is the Son of God in a sense only applicable to himself. He is *the* Son of God, "the only-begotten of the Father," &c. He possesses the nature of God—equality with God; has the names of God—the perfections of God; and to him creation, providence, and redemption are ascribed, as well as to the Father. While he is "the child born, and the son given," he is the "mighty God, the everlasting Father, and the Prince of peace." Col. i. 15; Isai. vi. 5; Rom. i. 4; John i. 18; Matt. x. 16.

2. This question refers to faith in the Son of God.

"Dost thou believe," &c. Faith in Christ is that act of the mind by which we apprehend Christ as he is revealed to us in the word of truth. It is the act of the heart or affections, by which we heartily welcome him into our souls; and it is the act of the will, by which we cordially submit to him, and render cheerful obedience to his laws. Scripture abounds in metaphorical representations of this grace. It is beholding him, or looking to him; it is fleeing to him—walking in him—laying hold of him—receiving him—resting on him, &c. Observe,

3. That the question relates to our personal faith in Christ.

"Dost *thou* believe?" &c. It does not relate to others, but to ourselves. It does not refer to mere information or opinion, but to faith. It does not ask in reference either to past or future, but to the present: "Dost thou believe?" &c. We shall attempt,

II. *A Scriptural Solution of it.*

If we believe on the Son of God, we shall,

1. Remember the means by which we are brought into this happy state.

Faith is not natural to us: by nature we are unbelievers, far from God, and strangers to his Son. An important change has taken place; eyes open to see Christ—ears opened to his word—heart opened to his truth—and the soul brought to rely upon him for eternal salvation. If we believe on the Son of God,

2. We shall experience the influence of his Spirit on our souls.

"If any man hath not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." "The Spirit beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God." Rom. viii. 9 16.

Besides, the acts of faith are such tha we cannot perform them without being conscious of it. If we look, and hearken, and flee to Christ; if we build on him, live and walk in him, we cannot possibly be ignorant of it. If we believe on Christ,

3. We shall highly esteem and value Christ.

"To them that believe he is precious," yes, he is the fairest among ten thousand, and altogether lovely. His name will be as ointment poured forth: the soul will admire, the heart will love, and the lips magnify and exalt his name; he will be the soul's bread, the soul's riches, the soul's light, the soul's life, and the soul's all and in all. If we believe in him,

4. We shall enjoy peace and comfort of mind.

He is the Prince of peace, the Author of peace; and his gospel is the message of peace; and his gift to all believers is the enjoyment of peace. He is our peace; and all who believe on him are justified; and, being justified, we have peace with God, &c. Anxiety, restlessness, dread, and torment are banished, and all within is comfortable, joyous, peaceable, serene, and calm. If we believe on the Son of God,

5. Our souls will burn with love both to God and man

Faith works by love. We shall love God our Redeemer with all our hearts, and we shall love our fellow-men, and especially our fellow-saints, with pure hearts fervently. John iii. 14, 24; vii. 11, 19 &c. If we believe on the Son of God,

6 We shall be subject to his authority.

Deny ourselves—come out of the world—overcome it by faith—take up the cross—follow him—go without the camp, bearing his reproach—keep his holy words, and do his commandments. "Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you."

APPLICATION.

1. The text may be applied to various characters. To those who dwell in a Christian country: for without faith in the Son of God this will not avail. To general professors: for without this profession is of no use. To those zealous of gospel doctrines: for without personal faith our zeal cannot benefit. The important question is: "Dost thou believe on the Son of God?"

2. Let the Christian cultivate the evidences of his faith. Keep the signs of faith visible and bright before your eyes.

3. Let all grow in faith. Our credence should be more firm; our reliance more entire; our persuasion more confident. The grain of mustard seed must grow up to a great tree: the small cloud must spread over all the heavens: the little leaven leaven the whole lump. Let each soul say: Lord, increase my faith.

4. He that believeth not must perish. Mark xvi. 16; John iii. 18.

5. In the gospel, Christ, in all his benefits, is offered to all. Invite, exhort, &c., all to come unto him and have life.

SKELETON I.

DANGER OF RECEIVING THE GOSPEL IN VAIN.

"We then, as workers together with God, beseech you, also, that ye receive not the grace of God in vain."—2 *Cor.* vi. 1.

THIS subject presents to us,

I. *A striking Description of the Ministers of the Gospel.*

"Workers together with God."

1 Workers.

Not lords, not hirelings, not idlers—but workers. All the statements and figurative descriptions of Scripture represent them as such. They are watchmen, Ezek. xxxiii. 7; fishers, Matt. iv. 19; sowers, Psal. cxxvi. 6 shepherds, &c., Acts xx. 28 Their work is,

(1) Spiritual. They have to do with spirits, employ spiritual instruments and weapons. Design spiritual. 2 Cor. x. 4.

(2) Arduous and difficult. Enemies &c., powerful, numerous, and too often successful. To be diligent, instant in season, &c

(3) Solemn and responsible. Eternal interests of men at stake. Must give an account to God, &c.

2. Workers with God.

Under his direction—in his service—with the same end and object in view.

3. Workers together with God.

God the Great Cause—they are his instruments. Treasure from God—they are the earthen vessels through which it flows. They sow—God blesses. They proclaim the gospel—God makes it powerful to salvation. They prophesy—God breathes upon the dry bones. Ministers are workers together with God We have,

II. *An interesting Representation of the Gospel.*

"Grace of God." See, also, Titus ii 11. It is so, as it is,

1. The production of grace.

Whole scheme originated in grace "Herein is love," &c.

2. It is a revelation of grace—

Of pardon, peace, and eternal life to rebels; without any merit or worthiness in them.

3. It is graciously bestowed.

Without money or price Isai. lv. 1, Rev. xxii. 17.

4. It effects a gracious change in the soul.

Darkness to light; sin to holiness, Satan to God. 1 Cor. vi. 11. We have,

III *An affectionate Entreaty addressed to the Recipients of the Gospel.*

"We then, &c., beseech you, also, that ye receive not the grace of God in vain."

1. When is it received in vain?

When we do not understand it. When we feel no interest in it When we are not saved by it.

2. What are the principal causes of men receiving it in vain?

Inconsideration; Deut. xxxii. 29; Isai i. 3. Love of the world; Matt. xiii. 22. Unbelief; Heb. iv. 2.

3. What will be the result of receiving the grace of God in vain?

Ignorance of mind; disquietude of soul; hardness of heart; eternal death.

4. How necessary, then, that we beseech men that they do not receive it in vain!

By the preciousness of their souls—blessedness of religion—peace in dissolution—and everlasting glory, we are to beseech, &c

We must beseech plainly, earnestly, affectionately, constantly with many tears with much prayer, &c

APPLICATION.

Learn, 1. The invaluableness of the gospel. 2. The responsibility of the ministerial office. 3. The importance of a practical use of our privileges

SKELETON II.

NECESSITY OF MORAL PURITY.

"If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me. —*John* xiii. 8.

INTRODUCTION.—Assembly convened—occasion—supper—Saviour going to leave them—intended to impress upon them the importance of lowliness of mind, condescension, and humility—taught them by his own example—how striking! Peter's rash refusal—the Redeemer's expostulation, &c.

I. *Human Nature is defiled.*

This is an important gospel doctrine. This defilement is,

1. The result of original transgression.

Adam begat a son in his own likeness. Fountain became corrupt; consequently, streams impure. Tree became bad; fruit bad also. Human nature became diseased; this disease hereditary, all the progeny tainted. This is a doctrine,

2. Established by Scripture statements.

Job confessed it; Job xl. 4. David, Psalm lv. 5, and Jeremiah (xvii 19) affirmed it. Christ also taught it, Matt. xv. 19; so did the apostles, Rom. v. 12; Eph. ii. 3.

3. Strikingly manifested in the conduct of men around us.

All wandering in their own evil ways, following their own devices, &c.

II. *Human Nature may be purified.*

God hath not abandoned us to our apostasies, but provided means for our recovery and restoration to his image and favor.

1. The blood of Christ is the remedy.

This is that fountain spoken of by the prophet. Zech. xiii. 1.

"There is a fountain filled with blood,
Drawn from Immanuel's veins;
And sinners plunged beneath that flood
Lose all their guilty stains."

"The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin." 1 John i. 7; Eph. i. 7, Heb. xiii. 12; Rev. i. 5.

2. Word of truth the instrumental means.

Truth makes our defilement evident—manifests the remedy—urges its adoption—presents great and powerful motives to the mind. John xvii. 17; James i. 18; 1 Peter i. 23; Rom. x. 7.

3. Faith brings the mind in contact with the remedy.

"Purifying their hearts by faith." Acts xv. 9; Rom. ix. 30; Eph. ii. 8.

4. The Spirit's influence makes the whole efficient to salvation.

"And I will put my Spirit within you," &c. Ezek. xxxvi. 27. "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit," &c. Zech. iv. 6; 2 Cor. iii. 6; 1 Peter i. 2; John iii. 5, 8; Rom. vi. 11.

III. *Without this Purification, we can have no part with Christ.*

1. No part in his favor.

He cannot rejoice in those who abide in impurity; he cannot approve of them, he cannot complacently love or delight in them.

2. No part in his fellowship.

Light hath no fellowship with darkness evil with good; or holiness with sin There must be sameness of mind, and agreeable oneness of spirit, or no fellowship.

3. No part in his saving benefits.

An indifference to holiness, and an unwillingness to be holy, excludes from justification, peace, joy, and all the high privileges of gospel salvation.

4. No part in his public approval at the last day.

"Then shall he say to them on his left hand." Matt. xxv. 41.

5. No part in the blessedness of heaven.

"Blessed are the pure in heart," &c. "For without are dogs," &c. Rev xxii. 15.

APPLICATION.

This subject should lead, 1. To careful examination as to our real character. 2. If unrenewed, earnest solicitude after purification. 3. Immediate application to the only remedy provided

SKELETON III.

ZION'S PEACE AND PROSPERITY.

"Peace be within thy walls, and prosperity within thy palaces."—*Psalm* cxxii. 7.

THE royal psalmist's devout attachment to God's house and ordinances—the interest he displayed—the influence he exerted—the prayers he presented—how worthy of our imitation! Notice,

I. *The Blessings desired*—

"Peace and prosperity."

The object of this prayer was Jerusalem, or rather God's holy Zion, the mount to which the tribes repaired, where God was feared, and loved, and praised. It was a striking type of the gospel church; its elevation, its royalty, its walls, its privileges, and its services, all pointed to the true Jerusalem, the New Testament Zion, and spiritual house of the Lord. The blessings so devoutly desired on her behalf are two:

1. Peace.

"Peace be within thy walls." Peace is the opposite of confusion, hostility, and strife; it signifies quietness, tranquillity, harmony. See Ps. cxxxiii. Highly important in a national, domestic, or personal sense; equally so spiritually. Church has often been the seat of discord and contention. See this, at Rome—Rom. xvi. 17; at Corinth—1 Cor. iii. 3.

2. Prosperity.

"Prosperity within thy palaces." Prosperity is the church growing, advancing, increasing her friends, conquering her foes, progressing in light, and life, and glory; when the whole spiritual fraternity "are continuing steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship," &c. Acts ii. 42–47. And when the Lord is adding to it such as shall be saved. Acts ii. 47.

Let us notice,

II. *The evidence of their Possession.*

When may the church be said to enjoy peace and prosperity?

1. When unity and love prevail within.

When they act and feel as members of one holy family—one soul, one spirit, one happy atmosphere which all breathe—one end pursued by the whole. Phil. iii. 15–17.

2. When the ordinances are cheerfully and regularly attended.

When the holy tribes go up with joy to the house of the Lord—when God's courts are crowded with spiritual worshippers all engaged in the public services of the Most High—when all feel that it is God's banqueting house and the gate of heaven to the soul.

3. When the members of Zion are growing in knowledge and holiness.

Mind more luminous—heart softer and warmer—life consecrated—whole soul rising into more and more of the life and spirit of God.

4. When many are asking their way to Zion, with their faces thitherward.

When this man and that man are born there—stones dug out of nature's quarry, squared, polished, and made living stones in God's holy house—wanderers reclaimed—dying sinners snatched as brands from the burning—the Lord's arm made bare in the gracious subjugation of his enemies—multitudes flocking to her, as "clouds, or doves to their windows." Notice,

III. *The means of their Promotion*

How is this peace and prosperity to be secured? The text furnishes an example: let her friends say, "Peace be within thy walls," &c. Let them say it,

1. Literally.

Let their words be words of peace and good-will; let the lip ever express a desire for her true welfare.

2. Let it be the language of the heart

Every power, and faculty, and feeling be identified with it, and consecrated to it Let the eye see for it, the ear hear for it, the heart beat for it, and the memory remember for it. Ps. cxxxvii. 5, 6.

3. Let it be the language of the life.

We must embody our wishes in practice, in fervent prayer to God, in assiduous attention to our duties, in zealous efforts to extend her cords, and to bring strangers to dwell within her happy gates.

4. We must express the language of the text in the order it is placed before us.

First we must say, "Peace be within thy walls," and then, "Prosperity within thy palaces." The latter can only proceed from the former; no prosperity to God's vineyard unless the atmosphere be tranquil and serene. Storms of contention destroy the tender plants, and lay waste the garden of the Lord. Let peace be secured, and prosperity is certain.

APPLICATION.

How important that we possess the spirit

of the text. How desirable, 1. On God's account, that his name may be magnified. 2. On the church's account; that her holy walls may be reared up. 3. On the sinner's account; that he may be attracted, and desire a name and place among the Lord's people. 4. On our own account; that we may enjoy the blessing of the Lord, "for they that love her shall prosper."

SKELETON IV

THE HEAVENLY MANSIONS.

"In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you."—*John* xiv. 2

REDEEMER had been intimating his departure. Minds of the disciples overwhelmed with sorrow. Greatly dejected at the idea of separation. Jesus calls upon them as his disciples to confide in him, and especially in what he was going to reveal. "In my Father's house," &c. Three things in the text.

I. *The House specified.*

"In my Father's house."

God has two especial houses—his church on earth and his church in heaven; the militant and triumphant; his visible earthly, and his invisible heavenly, temple. The text refers to the latter, to God's heavenly courts; his glorious abode; his imperial palace. In calling it *His* Father's house, he showed,

1. His own right to it—

As Son and Heir of all things. And he showed,

2. The right of all his people to it—

By and through him: "For if children, then heirs, heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Jesus Christ." Hence he said, "I ascend to my Father and to your Father, to my God and your God."

This house is,

(1) A heavenly house

(2) A magnificent and glorious house.

(3) An extensive house.

(4) And an eternal house—eternal in the heavens. Notice,

II. *The Mansions referred to.*

"In my Father's house are many mansions." Mansion signifies the opposite of tent or tabernacle. It means a place of permanent abode—a stable dwelling. The heavenly mansions are distinguished,

1. For their great variety.

This will be necessary—to exhibit perfect justice; to suit the various capacities of the saints; and to establish the statements of revelation. "One glory of the sun," &c. To one is given five, to another ten cities, &c. They will be,

2. Mansions of intellectual light.

No darkness, mental or moral; no twilight—perfect noonday. Sun never sets.

3. Mansions of spotless purity.

No sin, original or practical; no sinful infirmity. Atmosphere untainted; all holiness to the Lord. Nothing enters in that defileth, &c.

4. Mansions of undisturbed repose.

This world a sea; church itself tossed hither and thither. Wilderness; scene of toil, suffering, and conflict. In heaven all these things are unknown; rest, entire and eternal.

5. Mansions of superlative blessedness.

Fulness of joy, and pleasures for evermore. Unbounded and eternal blessedness.

6. Countless in number—"many."

Heaven not a wilderness—not a village; but a magnificent and densely populated city—"come from the east and west," &c. "A multitude that no man can number."

III. *These are Prepared Mansions.*

1. Prepared by the Redeemer.

His death, resurrection, public entry into heaven, intercession, &c. He is entered as a Forerunner. Taken possession in our name, and for our benefit, by his own blood.

2. Prepared for believers.

"Ye believe in God, believe also in me." None but believers have a title; none but believers have the meetness; none but believers have the promise.

APPLICATION.

(1) Are we the friends and disciples of Christ? Let us rejoice, not only in what he did for us on earth, but in what he is doing for us in heaven. (2) Let us rejoice in hope of our future inheritance. (3) Let us act as expectants of such great and eternal blessedness.

SKELETON V

LOVE AND OBEDIENCE

"This is the love of God, that we keep his commandments, and his commandments are not grievous."—1 *John* v. 3.

TRUE religion consists of three things; knowledge in the mind, love in the heart, and obedience in the life. The first is the theoretical, the second the experimental, and the third the practical, part of Christianity. The first leads to the second, and the second produces the third; separate, hey are only imperfect parts; but together, they form the sum and substance of religion. The text refers to the two latter, love and obedience, and affirms that his obedience is not grievous. I. Obedience to God's commands is the best evidence of love to God. II. His commandments are not grievous.

I. *Obedience to God's Commands is the best Evidence of Love to him.*

1. Love is the spring of action.

It is this which influences the lip and the life; if we love God, it will effect the consecration of the lip, and the free devotion of the life to him.

2. Love produces the most disinterested obedience.

It finds in itself the cause and end of labor and exertion. When the object loved demands it, it riots in danger, and glories in sacrifices and toil. Men may obey others from fear or self-interest; but the Christian obeys "because the love of Christ constraineth him."

3. Love always produces the most constant obedience.

It enfetters us to the object of our delight. Many waters cannot quench it, nor death itself destroy it.

4. Love invariably produces obedience.

The loving subject cheerfully yields subjection to his sovereign; the loving child freely obeys his parents; and the loving servant obeys his master with delight; so the true Christian willingly gives to his king and parent, and master, the homage of his heart, and the obedience of his life.

II. *God's Commandments are not grievous.*

1. Explain this declaration.

It does not mean that they are not grievous to some persons; to the carnal they are toil and drudgery. Neither does it mean that they are not strict, for they extend to heart, lip, and life—to God, mankind and ourselves. But it means, they are not grievous to those who love God; such esteem "his yoke to be easy, and his burden to be light."

2. Establish this declaration.

They are not grievous because they are

(1) The commandments of goodness itself God is good, and all his commandments are the regulations of that goodness. They do not issue from a tyrant, an enemy or from cupidity and selfishness; but from our Creator, Benefactor, and Redeemer—him who hath loved us even unto death. They are not grievous,

(2) Because they accord with the dictates of sound reason. To adore the highest, to serve the greatest, to love the best, and to trust in the most wise and powerful, must commend itself as being "our most reasonable service." They are not grievous,

(3) Because they conduce to our present advantage. They tend to health, reputation, and long life; they produce cheerfulness, serenity, and content; "for godliness is profitable to all things," &c. Prov. iii. 1–18; Isai. i. 19. They are not grievous,

(4) Because of the divine assistance which aids us in our services. The Christian does not go a warfare at his own charge. When God commands, he gives power to obey, strength and grace sufficient. "He supplies all their need," &c. Thus they "can do all things through Christ, &c. They are not grievous,

(5) Because of the glorious prospect they unfold. "Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city." Rev. xxii. 14; 1 Cor. xv. 58; Gal. vi. 9; Rev. ii. 10.

APPLICATION.

(1) Do we love God? Is he the first in our esteem? Does he command our chief thoughts—engage our chief attention? Do we give the highest evidence of our attachment by keeping his commandments? And do we truly feel and rejoice that his commandments are not grievous? (2) Invite his enemies, the servants of the wicked one, to bear his yoke, to exchange employment, to secure the best of masters, the pleasantest work, and the greatest and surest reward. (3) The subject presents an un

erring test by which we may judge those around us, and correctly know our own hearts. "By their fruits ye shall know them"

SKELETON VI.

THE DAY OF SALVATION.

"Behold, now is the day of salvation."—2 *Cor* vi. 2.

SUBJECT of the text; the highest and most important that can engage our attention; that on which the wisdom, power, and goodness of Deity have been most prominently displayed; that which angels contemplate with delight; and that which is identified with all our hopes of solid happiness, either in this life, or that which is to come. Let us consider the passage as it stands before *us*. I. Salvation. II. Day of Salvation. III. The Attention it demands from us. "Behold, now is the day of salvation."

I. *Salvation.*

Salvation implies misery, or danger, or both of them; and includes deliverance from them. Man's state is both miserable and dangerous. He is a rebel, outlawed, under sentence of death. In addition to which, he is wretched, poor, diseased, ready to perish. His condition is one of extreme wretchedness and imminent peril.

The gospel salvation provides deliverance from the danger, and restoration from the misery. It announces pardon for his crimes, and a balm for all his maladies.

This salvation, which is the product of divine love, the effect of the Redeemer's death, and the work of the Holy Spirit, and which is received by faith—is,

1. Perfect in its nature.

It is adapted to our state, and commensurate with all our misery and crimes. It embraces both the body and the soul.

2. Present in its application.

Revealed now, offered now, must be received now.

3. Universal in its extent.

"Whosoever will, may come," &c. It is not God's will that any should perish, &c. Christ died for the world. John iii. 16; 1 John ii. 2. And the gospel is to be preached through all the world to every creature. Mark xvi 16

4. Free in its communication

Not bestowed in the way of human merit but without money and without price. Isai lv. 1, &c.

5. Eternal in its duration.

Which shall endure forever. 2 Tim. ii 10; Heb. v. 9; 1 Peter v. 10; John iii 15; x. 28; Rom. vi. 23

II. *Day of Salvation.*

This may refer generally to the world or specially to man. Let us consider it,

1. Generally to the world.

It includes the whole space of time, from the first promise to the end of the gospel age. First promise; the glimmering of light. Patriarchal age; the day break. Prophetical era; the morning. Christ's incarnation; the rising of the Sun of Righteousness, &c. Ours is necessarily the evening of this day

2. *Specially to man.*

Then it is the period of human life, a short, uncertain period—only time of light and exercise, which terminates in the night of death, and the darkness of the grave. Eccles. ix. 10.

III. *The Attention it demands.*

1. It has a claim upon our examination.

What are we doing? How do we stand in reference to God, salvation, death, and eternity?

It has a claim,

2. Upon our consideration.

"O that they were wise, that they knew this," &c. Deut. xxxii. 29; Ps. l. 22; Isai. i. 3; Ezek. xii. 3; Hag. i. 5.

3. Upon our faith.

Now we have the cross, the gospel, the instruction, the warrant, the promise—"He that believeth shall be saved."

4. Upon our diligence.

What have we to do? Soul to save—generation work—heaven to gain—to provide for eternity, &c. "Give diligence to make your calling and election sure." 2 Peter i. 10; iii. 14.

APPLICATION.

(1) Let us be earnest in reference to this salvation ourselves. And, (2) Recommend it to the attention of all around us.

"Point sinners to the Saviour's blood,
And cry, Behold the way to God."

SKETCH V.

THE MINISTERIAL REQUEST

"Brethren, pray for us."—2 *Thess.* iii. 1

The first ministers of the cross were distinguished for their zeal, constancy, and disinterestedness in the cause of their Divine Master. Their zeal made them regardless of difficulties, sacrifices, and toils. Their constancy enabled them unflinchingly to pursue their holy career; and their disinterestedness led them to trample upon all merely temporary good, and to count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus their Lord. They were equally distinguished for their humility. They preached not themselves, but Christ; and they were willing to be abased, and counted as nothing, that Christ might be all in all. What a striking example of this in the apostle Paul, that master-spirit in the Christian cause, who, notwithstanding his strong natural powers, his high literary attainments, and his exalted Christian gifts, humbly stoops to the members of the church at Thessalonica, and entreats, for himself and fellow-laborers, a place in their remembrance, and an interest in their prayers! "Brethren, pray for us," &c. Notice, I. The Request Presented. II. The Grounds on which it Rests.

I. *The Request presented.*

"Brethren, pray for us." In this request we have the persons addressed—and the request which is made.

1. The persons addressed—

"Brethren." This is the common name of all the members of God's spiritual family—the name given to them by the Saviour; 'One is your Master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren." As brethren they have one Father—born of the same incorruptible seed, bearing the same likeness, possessing the same spirit, and sharers of the same blessings. They may differ in many minor points, as the children of the same family differ in feature; but in these great outlines of character they are all one. Many of them may be babes, some of them young men, and some fathers; but still the term employed includes all the branches of the family. They are all brethren. Notice,

2. The request itself—

"Brethren, pray for us." The same request is presented to the church at Ephesus: Eph. vi. 19; to the church at Colosse: Col. iv. 3; to the scattered Hebrew brethren: Heb. xiii. 18; and also in his first letter to the Thessalonians, v. 25 "Brethren, pray for us,"

1. That the power of religion may be eminently experienced in our own souls.

An eminent degree of religion is necessary to the Christian minister. He must have much light and life who is to enlighten and enliven others. A leader must have skill and courage—must have a double portion of energy and earnestness, that he may inspire others with the same spirit. How has this been seen in the senate and in the field! It should be so in the church. No amount of talent will make up for a deficiency here. Brethren, pray for us,

2. That we may be preserved from the official dangers to which we are exposed.

Ministers have the same enemies in common with all the brethren; same nature, Satan, the world, &c. Besides these, there are dangers peculiar to our office, especially,

(1) Pride—pride of talent, learning, or popularity.

(2) Selfishness—seeking the fleece rather than the flock; theirs rather than them.

(3) Indolence—inattention to our charge neglect of the afflicted and tried Brethren, pray for us,

3. That we may be able ministers of the New Testament.

That we may clearly comprehend the truth in all its parts and bearings; that we may be able to communicate it clearly, simply, powerfully; that we may have an abundance wherewith to feed the souls of the people; and that there may be variety to suit the state and circumstances of all—that the whole may have a portion of meat in due season. Brethren, pray for us,

4. That prudence and fidelity may distinguish our labors.

(1) Prudence. Not worldly prudence, that shuns the cross, and compromises truth; but that prudence which will keep us from giving offence to the sincere of Christ's flock, enable us to discriminate &c.

(2) Fidelity—to the word—to God—to souls. No fear of men—no love of ease—no thirsting for lucre. To be free from the blood of all men. Notice,

II. *The Grounds on which it rests*

1. It rests on the ground of the mutu

connection which subsists between minister and people.

If we labor for your salvation, you are not only to supply our bodily wants, but to feel for our spiritual necessities. The principle which constrains us to preach to you, ought to constrain you to pray for us

2. It rests on the law of love.

Love may do much for our temporal comfort and happiness; but love to our souls will never omit prayer on our behalf. This is the highest charity towards us, the truest evidence of love.

3. It rests on the prevalency of fervent prayer

How it bore up the arms of Moses! What Elijah did with it! How it effected Peter's liberation! &c. How important that it should be brought to bear on the pulpit!

4. It rests on its advantages to yourselves.

If the earthen vessels are filled with celestial treasures through your prayers, that treasure will be the enriching of yourselves; the ministry will be to you a ministry of light, of comfort, and of life.

5. It rests on its beneficial influence on the church.

Ungodly and unfaithful ministers are the bane of the church. Faithful men are her greatest ornaments and truest friends. How desirable that her leaders should be valiant for the truth, her shepherds faithful, her watchmen vigilant, her stars luminous!

6. It rests on its connection with the salvation of souls.

The apostle adds, "That the word of the Lord may have free course and be glorified;" that, like a rich and fertilizing river, it may run without interruption, sending its living streams in every possible direction, giving verdure and fruitfulness to the moral world. Yes; the ministry is God's great ordinance for the salvation of souls. Pray, then, that we may be holy, earnest, diligent, and useful; that we may be instrumental in turning many from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God.

APPLICATION.

Learn, 1. The high responsibility of the ministerial office. Let candor and forbearance be exercised towards it. Forget not that those who stand in such high places are men of like passions with yourselves Feel for them; be interested in their welfare; and pray for their salvation and success.

2. Forget not to pray for yourselves. No consideration whatever must induce indifference to your own souls. Prayers from such could be of no value to the minister of your choice and affection.

3. It is only believing, fervent prayer either for ourselves or others that will avail.

SKETCH VI.

THE MOST IMPORTANT PURSUIT.

"Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you."—*Matt.* vi. 33.

Man is a compound being, formed of two parts; the one material and earthly the other immaterial and spiritual. The one requires temporal provision, the other spiritual; and both are necessary to his complete happiness The gospel meets both demands. It presents all possible spiritual good before the mind, and engages that all necessary temporal good shall be supplied to the body See verses 25, 26. But then, while both body and soul have wants to be supplied, and while both may lawfully engage our attention, reason and religion demand, that that which is most really important and intrinsically valuable should engage our first and chief attention This is the obvious meaning of the text: "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."

Notice, I. The Direction given. And, II. The Promise annexed.

I. *The Direction given.*

"Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness." Notice,

1. The objects of pursuit.

"Kingdom of God," &c. Kingdom of God sometimes signifies the Christian dispensation, Mark i. 15; sometimes the heavenly world, 1 Cor. xv. 50. It also signifies the spiritual privileges and blessings of the gospel; and it is in this sense we are to understand the declaration of the apostle, "The kingdom of God is not meat and drink," &c., Rom. xiv. 17. Also, that saying of Christ is to be understood in the

same sense, "Behold, the kingdom of God is within you;" Luke xvii. 21. The text is to be understood in like manner.

There is, however, a close and inseparable connection subsisting between these three kingdoms. By receiving the dispensation of the gospel with cordiality and joy, we become interested in and identified with its blessings and privileges; and through this spiritual kingdom we receive both a title and meetness for God's eternal kingdom and glory. But we are also to seek,

2. His righteousness.

Which includes,

(1) Justifying righteousness. Rom. i. 17; iii. 21, &c.; v. 17; 1 Cor. i. 30.

(2) Sanctifying righteousness; or the renewing of the mind by the Spirit of God. Eph. iv. 2, 3, 4; 2 Cor. iii. 18.

(3) Practical righteousness; or obedience to the commandments of God. Rom. vi. 13; Eph. v. 9; 1 John ii 29. Observe, these things we are,

3. To seek.

"Seek ye," &c. This implies,

(1) A consciousness of our need of them. Many do not feel this, many are totally indifferent to them. But the soul awakened to the realities of religion is deeply impressed with the necessity of them. It also implies,

(2) Earnest application for them. Application to the right source—throne of grace. In a right way—by fervent and believing prayer; Heb. iv 14. And with perseverance, until we obtain them. Importunate widow. Woman of Canaan, &c.

4. These things are to be sought first.

"Seek ye first," &c.

(1) In point of time we should seek them first. Religion should have the precedence of every thing; should be the foundation of the business of life. We only set out right in life when we do so upon this principle. 2 Chron. xxviii. 9; Eccles. xii. 1; Lam. iii. 27.

(2) First in point of importance and attention. Our arrangements must be based here. Our chief thoughts, and cares, and anxieties must be absorbed in this. Every thing else must be made to subserve it: all other things transacted in reference to it.

But why must these things be sought first?

(1) Because of their superlative worth. Pearl of great price. The excellency and end of life. All other things comparatively but as dross, &c. Phil. iii. 8, &c.

(2) Because, whatever we possess, we can have no solid enjoyment without them Nothing else satisfies the mind, fills the void, &c. This is the only solid basis of true and lasting blessedness.

(3) Because now is the only certain time of obtaining them. Religion and its blessings are all in the present tense. "To-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts." "Behold, now is the day of salvation." To-day is ours, for our use and improvement; to-morrow is God's and he may either give it or withhold it from us. There is a solemn example in the case of the rich worldling: "Thou fool, this night," &c.

We should seek them first,

(4) Because of their eternal duration. All here is transient, mutable, and perishing. All beyond is sure, unchanging, and eternal. How the worth of heaven is enhanced by its connection with eternity! The misery of hell, how dreadful when viewed through the same medium!

We pass on to consider,

II. *The Promise annexed.*

"And all these things shall be added unto you." Notice,

1. What these things are.

See from verse 25. It evidently includes meat, drink, clothing—those things which the body requires for its comfortable subsistence. Luxuries are not included Not necessary. Often injurious. But what is necessary shall be provided. See the psalmist's experience in this matter, Psalm xxxvii. 35: "Bread shall be given him and his water shall be sure." Isaiah xxxiii. 16. God gives these things to the beasts of the field, and to the fowls of the air, and believers are of much higher value than these. He gives these things to his enemies, to the wicked: and surely he will not, nay, we know of a surety that he will not, forget or cast off his own children. Besides, "Godliness is profitable to all things, having the promise of the life that now is," &c. 1 Tim. iv. 8. Observe,

2. The way in which these things shall be communicated.

"All these things shall be added." Added, as a matter of course, or thrown into the bargain, as good old Trapp has it, in the way that drapers give thread, &c., to those who purchase cloth. Then notice

3 The certainty of its fulfilment.

"These things shall be added," &c. Here is nothing doubtful; all is definite, plain, and absolute. We may confidently rely on the fulfilment of this promise. If we reflect upon the power and truth of the promiser—upon his riches and goodness—upon his faithfulness and immutability—upon his goodness to his people in every age and country—nothing that he ever promised has failed. Besides, our bodies are his created and redeemed property; and he will not allow them to perish after his infinite skill has fashioned, and his unbounded mercy redeemed them. Finally, he is our heavenly Father; and, "if our parents, being evil, give good things," &c. Matt. vii. 11; Rom. viii. 32.

APPLICATION.

Learn,

1. The perfection of the Christian religion. It is adapted to meet the exigences of both body and mind. It secures all that is really necessary for this life, and reveals all that is joyous and desirable in the life that is to come. We see,

2. That the blessings of religion must be sought. We are not indolently to wait for them, but to labor to obtain them. We are to ask, that we may receive; seek, that we may find; and to knock, that the door may be opened.

3. Let each examine himself, and ascertain his true state in the sight of God, and his prospects as regards the eternal world.

4. The careless rejectors of God's kingdom must necessarily perish

SKETCH VII.

GOD'S GRACIOUS PROPOSAL TO HIS ENEMIES.

"Fury is not in me. Who would set the briers and thorns against me in battle? I would go through them; I would burn them up together. Or let him take hold of my strength, that he may make peace with me, and he shall make peace with me"—*Isaiah* xxvii. 4, 5.

WHATEVER views we take of Deity, it is of great importance that we do not attribute to him any quality which implies either evil or imperfection. He assures us in the text, that fury is not in him. And it is not necessary, for he can easily effect all his purposes by the deliberate execution of his holy, just, and wise arrangements. He is the Fountain and Author of peace; nothing can ruffle or disturb the equanimity of the Divine Mind. All the passages in the writings of the sacred penmen, in reference to Jehovah, which speak of his wrath and fury, are therefore to be considered only in a figurative, and not in an absolutely literal sense. If fury belonged to Jehovah, none of his erring creatures could stand before him. But, although fury is not in him, yet he is the Just, the True, and the Holy One; and, therefore, he can in nowise connive at sin, or spare those who remain incorrigibly wicked. He reveals himself in his word as the never-failing Friend of his people, the determined enemy of the wicked, and as the willing Saviour of all who humble themselves and seek his mercy. As such the text presents him to our view: "Fury is not in me," &c.

We have in this passage

I. *A Figurative Representation of Wicked Men.*

"Who would set the briers and thorns against me?" &c.

Wicked men may be likened to briers and thorns in the following respects:

1. As they both originated in the first transgression.

It was a part of the sentence God passed upon Adam, that the earth should bring forth thorns and thistles, &c. In like manner, all that is morally evil in the world has flowed from that fountain of original guilt—from that act of crime which

"Brought death into the world, and all our woe."

All men partake of Adam's fallen likeness and depraved nature. Gen. iii. 11; Rom v 19.

Wicked men may be likened to briers and thorns.

2. On account of their worthlessness.

The righteous are compared to the vine, to the cedar, and to the olive: by which God's estimate of them is at once exhibited. But briers and thorns are emblems of utter worthlessness. The wise man says, "The heart of the wicked is little worth;" Prov x. 20. His powers are prostituted, and the great end of his life perverted. He yields no fruit to the real good of mankind or to the glory of God. They resemble briers and thorns,

3. In being exceedingly prolific

Weeds, and thistles, and thorns are generally very productive. So wickedness in the human heart is rapid in its growth, and lamentably productive. Wicked men and seducers wax worse and worse. This also applies to the world at large. See how soon the earth was filled with every thing polluted in thought and wicked in act! Gen vi. 5. Wicked men resemble briers and thorns,

4. In their end.

Hence says the apostle, "But that which beareth thorns and briers is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing; whose end is to be burned;" Heb. vi. 8. "Upon the wicked," says the Psalmist, "God will rain snares, fire, and brimstone," &c, Psal. xi. 6. Notice in the text,

II. *The Opposition of Wicked Men to God asserted.*

"Who would set the briers and thorns against me in battle?" There is direct hostility on the part of the sinner to God. All iniquity is against God—against his holy nature and righteous laws. It is treason—rebellion.

1. The heart of the wicked is set against God.

"The carnal mind is enmity against God;" Rom. viii. 7; Rom. i. 21, &c. "The heart is deceitful above all things," &c.; Jer. xvii. 9.

2. The mouth of the wicked is against God.

"The mouth of the wicked poureth out evil things;" Prov. xv. 28. "His mouth is full of cursing and deceit;" Psal. x. 7. "Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness;" Rom. iii. 14; Prov. xviii. 21.

3. The life of the wicked is against God.

Eph. ii. 1–3; Rom. i. 28–33. Yes; all his principles, plans, designs, and labors are in opposition to God.

III. *The Certainty of their Discomfiture and utter Ruin.*

"I would go through them, I would burn them up together." A moment's reflection ought to convince the most infatuated of the folly of contending with the Most High. "Wo unto him that striveth with his Maker;" Isai. xlv. 9. Consider,

1 That his wisdom would baffle all their stratagems.

He taketh the wicked in their own craftiness, &c.

2. His power would overcome all their opposition

However combined, however determined, he can crush them as the moth, destroy them with the breath of his nostrils. All creatures are at his command; all resources are his—the wasting pestilence, the deadly famine, the locust, the mildew, the tempest. He can slay in the chase, as in Pharaoh; dethrone reason, as in Nebuchadnezzar; or eat up with worms, as in Herod; or leave them to destroy themselves, as in Saul and Judas.

3. His wrath would utterly consume them.

See old world, Pharaoh and his host; cities of the plain; Assyrian army, &c. Skill, courage, numbers, confederacy are all in vain. "He would go through them; he would burn them up together." But fury is not in him; he desires not the death of a sinner; therefore consider,

IV. *The Gracious Alternative revealed*—

"Or let him take hold of my strength, and be at peace with me."

1. God's strength is his Son Jesus Christ—

Who is the wisdom of God and the power of God. Hence the angels and elders ascribe unto him "power, and riches and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing." Rev. v. 12.

2. To lay hold of his strength is to receive his Son in his mediatorial capacity.

To run into him as the man-slayer did into the city of refuge; or to lay hold of him as Adonijah did of the horns of the altar. 1 Kings i. 50.

3. The manner in which we must do this.

(1) With feelings of sorrowful regret on account of our previous hostility. "Look on him whom they have pierced, and mourn," &c.

(2) With a pacific disposition: "And be at peace with me." Weapons thrown away. "Cease to do evil," &c. Sue for peace. The palm and the olive-branch must wave, &c.

(3) In the exercise of believing supplication: "God be merciful to me a sinner!" "Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved."

(4) Immediately. "For to-day, if ye will hear his voice," &c. "Behold, now is the accepted time," &c. "Now it is high time to awake out of sleep." And what shall be the result if we thus lay hold of his strength, and be at peace with him?

This leads us to notice,

V. *The blessed Declaration given*—

"And he shall make peace with me." That the result shall be agreeable to this declaration, we infer from these considerations,

1. That this is God's own plan of reconciliation—

The production of his wisdom, power, and grace. And he will assuredly honor it. He cannot abandon it.

2. He is exceedingly desirous that sinners should avail themselves of it.

"Come and let us reason together," &c. Isai. i. 18. "Let the wicked forsake his way," &c. Isai. lv. 8. "The Spirit and the bride say, Come," &c. Rev. xxii. 17.

3. In no instance has he refused to be at peace with the sincere applicant for mercy.

Did he reject Manasseh, or the publican, or the dying thief, or the woman who was a sinner, or the Jerusalem murderers, or the flagrant and polluted sinners of Corinth? No: they all applied for peace, and they all made peace with him.

APPLICATION.

Learn 1. The sinner's madness and infatuation. To fight against God! to fight with the absolute certainty of discomfiture and ruin!

2. The goodness and condescension of God. How able to destroy, yet how willing and ready to save!

3. The only plan of safety. To lay hold of God's strength; to believe the record he hath given of his Son, &c.

4. The certainty of the truly penitent obtaining mercy.

"What though your sins are black as night,
Or glowing as the crimson morn,
Immanuel's blood can make them white
As snow through the pure ether borne."

SKETCH VIII

THE CHRISTIAN'S EXALTED PRIVILEGE.

"Having, therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest of all, by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us through the vail, that is to say, his flesh; and having an High Priest over the house of God: let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water."—*Heb.* x. 19-22

The ceremonies and sacrifices of the Levitical economy were typical of events connected with the Christian dispensation. The apostle endeavors, in this epistle, to show what these sacrifices and ceremonies were intended to represent. Their numerous offerings undoubtedly were shadows of that last great sacrifice offered in the end of the world once for all. The tabernacle and temple had reference both to the church on earth and the church in heaven. The holiest place had, however, a distinct reference to the habitation of the Deity; and the mercy-seat, to the throne of the heavenly grace, from whence Jehovah communicates, through his Son, the blessings of salvation to the guilty children of men. Believers are the privileged priests of the Christian dispensation, only with this advantage over the priests of old—that, while the former were confined to the holy place, believers are allowed to enter the holiest of all, by the blood of Jesus; seeing that Jesus, their High Priest, hath consecrated a new and living way for them through the veil, that is to say, his flesh, &c. Therefore, says the apostle, seeing that this is our exalted privilege, "let us draw near," &c.

We have in this interesting passage I. The Holiest Place. II. The Way of Access. And, III. The Manner of Approach.

I. *The Holiest Place*—

"Having, therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the *holiest*," &c.

A description of the holiest of all, or most holy place of the temple is given, Exod. xxv. 10, and Heb. ix. 3–7. It was typical of that "heaven of heavens" where Jehovah dwells, and to which the Saviour ascended, and where he ever appears to make intercession for us. It may be called the holiest, as it is,

1. The special residence of the Holy Deity.

Hence he says, "I dwell in the high and holy place;" Isai. lvii. 15. It may be called the holiest, also, as it is,

2. The scene of holy services.

"In the year that king Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. Above it stood the seraphim: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. And one cried unto another and said, Holy, holy, holy i

the Lord of hosts, &c. Isai. vi. 1–4; Rev. v. 8.

3. It is the residence of holy beings.

Here the pure in heart only see God. Nothing that defileth can enter, &c. Rev. xxi. 27; xxii. 14; Ps. xv. It is the holiest, as it is,

4. From this place those blessings are communicated that make us holy.

Hence we are invited to "Come to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace, &c. Here is our Sacrifice, through whose blood we are cleansed; our High Priest, through whom we are accepted; and from hence proceedeth the Holy Ghost, the Spirit of Truth, the Sanctifier, &c.

Let us consider,

II. *The Way of Access.*

This is specified in the terms, "By the blood of Jesus." The high-priest entered into the holiest with the blood of the victim which had been offered. In like manner we only can have access by the blood of Jesus; "for without shedding of blood there is no remission." Every part of our salvation is by and through the blood of Jesus.

(1) Redemption and forgiveness of sin. 1 Peter i. 18; Eph. i. 7.

(2) Sanctification. 1 John i. 7.

(3) Peace. Col. i. 20. And as in our text,

(4) Entrance into heaven is also "by the blood of Jesus."

This entrance into the holiest by the blood of Jesus is,

1. A new way.

"By a new way." It is so as distinguished from the way of access by the blood of bulls, &c. It is so as it is the last dispensation connected with the arrangements of redemption. It is so as it shall never wax old, as the former did, nor ever be superseded by any other. Here all is new—New Testament, new ordinances, new and better covenant, &c., &c.

This way is not only new, but,

2. It is a living way.

Way of old to the holiest was by the blood of a dead victim; ours, by the blood of a *risen living Saviour.* Way of old was the way of certain death to any but the high-priest; and he only entered once a year, and with blood; ours is freely open to all believers, and is the true way to immortality and eternal life John iii. 17.

3. It is a consecrated way.

Consecrated by Jesus—with his own blood—through the veil, his own flesh. And he is within the holiest, a High-Priest over the house of God. See ver. 10–18. Consecrated for all who believe in his name. Observe,

III. *The Manner of Approach.*

"Having boldness to enter in, &c., of us draw near with a true heart," &c.

1. We may approach with boldness.

"Having boldness," &c., does not mean boldness of ignorance, or of presumption, or of irreverence. Signifies having liberty of access; to come confidently, without fear of divine displeasure; with freedom of speech, &c.

2. With a true heart.

That is, in sincerity and earnestness; in spirit and in truth.

3. In full assurance of faith.

In faith; no other mode of approach is acceptable. Assurance of faith; mind made up, satisfied, confident. Full assurance of faith; that is, the greatest possible degree of confidence; without the least doubt or hesitation. This full assurance of faith must respect the efficacy of the Sacrifice and the readiness of God through that Sacrifice freely to accept of us.

4. With hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience.

The heart polluted requires purification. Blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin. This blood must be sprinkled upon the heart. In this way the conscience is delivered from evil, and becomes sanctified and pure.

5. With bodies washed with pure water.

As the high-priest was to wash his flesh with water before he put on the holy garments, Lev. xvi. 4; Numb. viii. 7; and as Christ, our great High-Priest, passed through the waters of baptism before he entered on his holy ministry; so believers are to be born both of water and the Spirit, before they enter the kingdom of God. It is evident the water in the text refers to baptism, by which we put on our profession of faith in, and love to Christ.

It is also worthy of observation, that gospel redemption includes both body and soul. And both are to be holy to the Lord; both to participate of eternal glory. Need we wonder, then, that Christ should appoint the ordinance of baptism, by which

we so significantly, wholly, both body and mind, become the Lord's? And this agrees with the great commission, "Go ye and preach he gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved" Mark xvi. 15, 16, &c. So Saul was commanded to "Arise, and be baptized, and wash away his sins, calling on the name of the Lord Jesus." Acts xxii. 16. This, then, is the divinely appointed method of coming to God through Jesus Christ. With boldness; with a true heart; in full assurance of faith; with a heart sprinkled from an evil conscience, and bodies washed with pure water.

APPLICATION

Learn,

1. The gospel method of salvation. By the blood of Jesus. And here we are brought to see its expensiveness and its preciousness.

2. That there must be personal application before we can enjoy its benefits. We must draw near, &c.

3. That all who thus personally approach shall obtain mercy. And,

4. How shall they escape who neglect so great salvation?

SKELETON VII.

BROTHERLY LOVE THE TRUE EVIDENCE OF RELIGION

"We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren."—1 *John* iii. 14.

Two things are very desirable; that we should know our natural and ruined state; and that we should know that that state is changed, and that the ruin is averted. Christianity is a system of evidence, and a work of holy and happy experience. Many modes of ascertaining our true character, by careful scriptural examination, by the desires and delights of our hearts, and by the inward testimony of the Spirit of God with our spirits, that we are the children of God. The text furnishes another: "We know that we have passed from death unto life," &c.

Notice, I. The Change described. And, II. The Evidence Adduced.

I. *The Change described*

"We know that we have passed from death unto life."

The change is represented as a change,

1. From death.

Death is the condition of all the unregenerate. They are dead in state; spiritually dead; dead by law. Under sentence of death: "He that believeth not is condemned already." John iii. 36; Rom. v. 12

They are,

2. Spiritually dead.

Every sign of death is upon the soul. As it respects God, religion, and the proper exercise of its faculties, the soul is really and properly dead.

(1) There is coldness and want of feeling No desire after God. No abiding sense of God's existence or omniscience, omnipresence, justice, or goodness. "Without God in the world."

(2) There is want of action. No powers employed for God. Tongue never praises God. Feet in the ways of disobedience and death. Heart cold and icy. Will rebellious. Understanding dark. Judgment perverted. Conscience impure.

(3) Loathsomeness. The spirit in its carnal state is crooked and perverse. Diseased with the foulest leprosy. Unfit for God's service, and incapable of heavenly felicity.

3. Exposed to eternal death.

"The wages of sin is death." The first death, viz., that of state, is the legal separation of the soul from God. The second or spiritual death, is the moral separation of the soul from God. And the third is, the separation of the soul from God forever. But the gracious change expressed in the text is,

4. From death to life.

(1) No longer under condemnation, Rom. viii. 2; v. 1, 2.

(2) No longer spiritually dead Soul alive. Every sign of life. Holy breathing. Pulse of prayer. Heart warm with love Powers employed for him, &c. &c. Beauty for ashes, &c. Created anew in Christ's lovely likeness. Eph. ii. 1.

(3) No longer exposed to eternal death "There is, therefore, now no condemnation," &c. Gift of God, eternal life, &c John iii. 14, 16, 36. There is,

5. The knowledge of this change.

"We know that we have passed from death unto life." Paul knew in whom he had believed, &c.; 2 Tim. i. 12. Peter

also; 1 Pet. i. 3–9. John also; 1 John ii. 17–20. This knowledge is evidently the Christian's privilege, and when experienced, produces great comfort of mind.

Notice the certainty of this change, from,

II. *The evidence adduced.*

"Because we love the brethren" Brethren includes all fellow-men.

1. Love—

Signifies affection for, complacency or delight in them.

This love to the brethren must be,

(1) Spiritual. Not for any human excellency, or ornament of mind or disposition; but because they are the spiritual seed of Jesus Christ.

(2) It must be constant. At all times, and in all circumstances.

(3) It must be universal. To all the brethren; of every name, and creed, and country; rich and poor, great and small. Jas. ii. 1–16.

(4) It must be manifest. By preference. By words of love. By beneficence, sympathy, &c.

2. Love to the brethren is evidence that we have passed from death unto life.

(1) As it is the fruit of the Spirit, which the saints only possess; Gal. v. 22.

(2) It is true conformity to Christ's holy likeness; John xiii. 34.

(3) This is the true gospel obedience. "A new commandment I give unto you," &c.; 1 John iii. 23.

(4) This is the appointed badge of our religion. "For by this shall all men know that ye are my disciples;" John xiii. 35.

(5) This is the surest sign of our true love to God. "For he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?" 1 John iv. 20. See also 1 John iv. 12; v. 1.

APPLICATION.

Learn,

I. The happiness, dignity, and safety of the Christian's state. Subject of life spiritual; heir to life eternal.

II. The holy amiableness of Christian piety; love to the brethren.

III The importance of having this evidence of our saintship. No other will stand in its place: for "he that hateth his brother is in darkness, even until now;" John ii. 9.

SKELETON VIII.

HOPE THE ANCHOR OF THE SOUL.

"Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the veil."—*Heb.* vi. 19

Let us consider, from this passage, the Nature, Characteristics, Importance, and Certainty of the Christian's Hope.

I. *The Nature of Christian Hope.*

Hope is the earnest desire of some future good.

1. The object is always really or imaginarily good.

What is evil is an object of fear, dislike, and dread. Object of the Christian's hope is the enjoyment of God, the true good. The enjoyment of his favor, smiles, and blessings to the end of life. And the enjoyment of his presence forevermore.

2. The object of hope must be future good.

Hope can never be exercised in reference to the past; and what we now possess, why should we hope for it? It is its peculiar province to be expecting, to be looking forward. Christian hope looks forward for the enjoyment of what God has laid up for them who love him.

3. The object of hope must be attainable.

It may be connected with difficulties but there must still be a possibility of possessing it. The Christian's hope is built on a foundation that can never fail; "For God will withhold no good thing from them that walk uprightly."

Notice,

II. *The Characteristics of this Hope.*

"Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul." Here a seafaring figure is employed to set forth the peculiar characteristics of the Christian's hope. Hope may be considered as the anchor of the soul in several respects.

1. The anchor is essential to secure the vessel in time of storm and peril.

When the Christian is in temptation and distress, hope keeps the soul from throwing away its confidence, and making shipwreck of faith and a good conscience. See Job riding out the storm, and singing: "I know that my Redeemer liveth," &c. Paul, waiting his martyrdom: "I know in whom I have believed," &c.; Job xix. 25; 2 Tim. i. 12.

2. The anchor is only of service when connected with a good cable.

The cable is faith. As this is weak or strong, clear or dark, hope will be lively or depressed. Hope depends for its vigor on a sound and strong faith.

3. The anchor must be employed; otherwise it can be of no service.

Neither will hope yield us any advantage unless it be exercised. We must abound in hope, and hope to the end; Heb. iii. 6; vi. 11; 1 Pet. i. 13.

4. The anchor must be cast on good ground.

Neither the rock, nor loose yielding sand, will admit the firm, abiding grasp of the anchor. It must be firm ground, or the anchor will slip, and the vessel be driven before the wind. The Christian's anchor is cast into that within the veil; it rests on Christ's finished work; on his having offered up himself as the sacrifice, and sprinkled the mercy-seat with his own precious blood: and his ever appearing in the presence of God to make intercession for us.

Notice,

III. *The Importance of this Hope.*

1. It is of importance to our Christian character.

It is as indispensable to the believing soul as the anchor is to the vessel. All God's children are begotten again to this lively hope, &c.

2. It is of importance to our labors.

All must be done in hope. We must sow in hope; pray and wrestle in hope. Hope brightens the eye, nerves the arms, strengthens the shoulders, &c.

3. It is of importance to our happiness.

It is the honey of life, and sweetens every bitter cup. It beguiles the tediousness of our journey. It anticipates future bliss, and brings from the eternal ocean streams of holy pleasure and delight.

> "The thoughts of such amazing bliss
> Should constant joys create."

Notice,

IV. *The Certainty of this Hope.*

"Both sure and steadfast." This is the very opposite of the hypocrite's hope, which shall perish; and of the hope of the ungodly, which shall be cut off. The Christian's hope cannot fail, unless,

1. The divine veracity fails.

He has spoken who is the Truth, and who does not repent, and who cannot change. And this he has not only affirmed by his word, but ratified with his solemn oath; James i. 17; Heb. vi. 18.

The Christian's hope cannot fail, unless,

2. Christ's precious blood should lose its saving efficacy.

By the shedding of that blood he has accomplished our redemption, and secured our salvation. And its efficacy is not only adequate to the deepest stains of human guilt, but its virtue is coexistent with eternity itself; Heb. v. 9.

The Christian's hope cannot fail, unless

3. Christ's presence in heaven and intercession should be unavailing.

And when we reflect that he is exalted to the highest dignity there, in his public and official character, that he may see the "travail of his soul, and be satisfied;" therefore his believing people cannot perish, without Christ being refused his covenanted reward. The Christian's hope is "sure and steadfast," for it rests on Jehovah's word and oath to them, and his word and promise to his Son; and on the continued preciousness of that offering, which possesses infinite and eternal virtue and merit; Isai. liii. 10, &c.; Heb. i. 1–13.

APPLICATION

1. Let the believer increase in hope, rejoice in hope, until its enrapturing anticipations shall terminate in glorious fruition. 2. Let the hopeless come to the blessed Saviour, who will, by the gracious manifestation of himself, banish darkness from the mind, and despondency and sorrow from the heart. There is, in the gospel, ample ground of hope to all who receive the record God has given of his Son.

SKELETON IX.

BARTIMEUS.

"And it came to pass, that as he was come nigh unto Jericho, a certain blind man sat by the wayside begging," &c.—*Luke* xviii. 35–43.

CHRIST went up and down doing good, healing divers diseases, and blessing the bodies and souls of men. He was never out of the way of usefulness. At all times and seasons he was at hand to remove the maladies of those who made application to him. He was now journeying to Jericho; and when he was near that city, he came in contact with a poor blind man, who sa

by the way-side to receive alms of the people. The noise of the approaching multitude attracted his attention; and when he understood that Jesus of Nazareth was approaching, "He cried out, Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on me," &c.

Observe,

I. *The Circumstances and Situation of Bartimeus.*

1. He was blind.

Deprived of the invaluable sense of seeing; stranger to the beauties of nature; incapable of enjoying the pleasant light of the sun; deprived of all the pleasures and profits of reading; state of imminent peril.

2. He was poor.

Not able to pursue any worldly calling; dependent on the alms of the passing traveller.

3. His case was, humanly speaking, hopeless.

Let these observations be applied to the natural state of men in their unregenerate condition. Understanding darkened, spiritually poor, and beyond the power of human energy to restore; Eph. ii. 1, 2; xi. 12.

Notice,

II. *His Application to Christ.*

Two indispensable occurrences preceded this:

(1) Christ passed that way. His condition rendered it impossible that he should have sought the Saviour.

(2) He was informed that it was Jesus who now approached, or still the Friend of sinners might have passed on, without his knowledge of that circumstance.

So, in like manner, Christ has passed by us; he has come near to us—become our dear kinsman—sought us out; or we never could have received his salvation. And this event of our dear Redeemer's visit of mercy has been made known to us; his character, offices, and work are all placed before us in the gospel. "The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth," &c.; Rom. x. 8–13; 2 Cor. vi. 2.

Having noticed these preliminary circumstances, we observe, that his application to Christ was,

1. An application for mercy.

Not demanded as his right, but sought as mercy. He felt his misery, knew his unworthiness, and therefore sought mercy. It was

2. The application of faith.

He addressed Christ as the Saviour "Jesus." He honored him as the expected Messiah, "Son of David." While rulers and priests proclaimed him as an impostor, and the Pharisees denounced him as a sinner, and attributed his miracles to Satanic agency, this poor man addressed him as Israel's long-expected deliverer, the Saviour of the world, and believed he possessed power to restore his sight: "Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on me." It was,

3. Ardent and persevering application.

He continued to cry and he ceased not until his cry was heard, and his petition granted. Observe,

III. *The Result of this Application.*

1. The people endeavored to silence him.

"And they rebuked him, that he should hold his peace." This was cruel. Yet, when sinners are seeking God, they will have many such rebukes: Satan, world, friends, formalists, will all cry, "Hold thy peace." Bartimeus cried the more earnestly. Let seeking sinners imitate him.

2. Jesus stood still.

Prayer arrested him in his course; cry of misery fastened him to the spot.

3. He commanded him to be brought.

Prayer brings the soul near to Christ.

4. He inquired his request.

Not that he was ignorant, but to give him an opportunity of presenting his plea. And he said, "Lord, that I may receive my sight." This is what we all need, that our understandings be savingly enlightened, &c.

5. He granted his soul's desire

"Receive thy sight." And in a moment his sightless eye-balls were enlightened, and he beheld the beautiful light of day. God says to us, "Arise, shine," &c.; Isai. lx. 1.

6. He honored his faith.

"Thy faith hath saved thee." Not by any inherent power or meritorious influence, but by bringing the malady to the right physician, by laying hold of the only Saviour. He had honored Christ by his faith, and now Christ honors that faith before the people. Eph. ii. 8. Observe,

IV. *The Course Bartimeus adopted.*

1. He followed Christ.

As a monument of his mercy; witness of and for his truth; as grateful for the

blessing conferred. Christ expects all his disciples to follow him. To let their light shine, &c.

2. He glorified God.

By acknowledgment, praise, and dedication. And, finally, "the people also gave praise to God."

"Buried in sorrow and in sin,
At hell's dark door we lay;
But now we rise by grace divine,
To see a heavenly day."

SKELETON X.

THE GOSPEL RECORD.

"And this is the record that God hath given to us, eternal life; and this life is in his Son."—1 *John* v. 11

Subject pre-eminently important; in which every man is concerned, and deserving of supreme attention. It is fully and clearly exhibited only in the gospel: "This is the record," &c.

The text presents to our view, I. Eternal Life. II. Eternal Life, as God's gift. III. Eternal Life in Jesus Christ. IV. Eternal Life, recorded for our belief.

In this subject we have,

I. *Eternal Life.*

Life is a very significant term, and is often employed to express all possible good, and includes the divine favor, likeness, and spirit. It is the opposite of condemnation, guilt, and alienation from God. See Rom. viii. 6, 10; Col. iii. 1, 3; Eph. i. 1, 5; Psal. xxx. 5.

Eternal life is this favor perpetuated; his blessedness in its consummation. It is the full, free, and uninterrupted enjoyment of God forever. It is represented as an inheritance; 1 Pet. i. 4. As a kingdom; Matt. xxv. 34. As a crown of life; Rev. ii. 10. It is called "eternal glory;" 1 Pet. v. 10. "Eternal weight of glory;" 2 Cor. iv 17. "A crown of glory;" 1 Pet. v. 4.

Observe,

II. *Eternal Life is the Gift of God*

"God hath given us eternal life."

1. Life is in God essentially.

"He is the living God." "Hath life in himself." "Who only hath immortality;" 1 Tim. vi 16. His life is underived, perfect, and eternal

2. All life proceedeth from him.

He giveth life to all his creatures; to beasts, to man, and to angels. "In whose hand is the soul of every living thing;" Job xii. 10.

Man's natural, rational, and spiritual life are necessarily from God. Eternal life can only proceed from the same divine and infinite source.

3. Eternal life is God's gift.

All life must be his gift, but eternal life is especially so; as it was given, in the highest and most gracious sense, to creatures utterly unworthy of the boon; and without any possible motive, except what his own unbounded compassion and mercy furnished.

III. *Eternal Life is in Jesus Christ*

"And this life is in his Son."

1. It is inseparably connected with his divine nature.

"For as the Father hath life in himself so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself;" John v. 26. "He is the life of the world."

2. Eternal life is in Christ, as it is grounded on his mediatorial work.

He hath procured this life for us by his obedience and death. "He died for our sins according to the Scriptures;" 1 Cor. xv. 3. "He became the Author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him;" Heb. v. 9. Eternal life is God's gift, "through our Lord Jesus Christ;" John x. 11, 15, 17; 1 John iii. 16; iv. 10; Rom. vi. 23; v. 6, 7, &c.

3. Eternal life is in Christ, as it is officially bestowed by him.

"I am come that they might have life," &c.; John x. 10. "I give unto my sheep eternal life;" John x. 28. "He that hath the Son hath life;" 1 John v. 12. He is the bread of life, and "giveth life to the world;" John vi. 33.

4. Eternal life is in Christ alone.

"Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life." Eternal life is not in Moses, or Elijah, or the Baptist, or in the apostles: it is not in duties, nor in ordinances, nor sacrifices, nor yet in graces: no, it is not in repentance, nor yet in faith. However these may be connected with the blessing of eternal life, (and connected they are,) eternal life is only truly in Jesus Christ. "This is the true God and eternal life;" 1 John v. 20.

In this subject we have,

IV. *Eternal Life recorded.*

This is the record," &c.

1. Where is it recorded?

In the Holy Scriptures: in the Psalms and Prophets; especially in the Gospels and Epistles. In these, his person, his works, his sufferings, his offices, and his benefits are all recorded.

2. How is it recorded?

(1) Plainly. "Life and immortality brought to light." "True light come." Day longed for by prophets and kings. No longer the shadows, the ceremonies, and the types.

(2) Fully. Not in drops; but now in copious streams.

"Salvation, like a river, rolls,
Abundant, free, and clear."

3. For what is it recorded?

(1) For our information. That we may know the joyful news.

(2) For our faith. That knowing, we may believe.

(3) For our salvation. "And that, believing, we may have life;" John xx. 21; 1 John iii. 23; v. 12, 13.

APPLICATION.

1. Let us value and search the record. 2 Let us receive the Saviour. And thus, 3. Obtain the gift, even eternal life. "He that believeth not the Son, shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him;" John iii. 36.

SKELETON XI.

THE GOOD MAN'S BLESSEDNESS.

"Blessed is the man whom thou choosest, and causest to approach unto thee, that he may dwell in thy courts: we will be satisfied with the goodness of thy house, even of thy holy temple."—*Psalm* lxv. 4.

This psalm contains a most beautiful and poetical representation of God, both in the riches of his providence, and in the blessings of his grace. The Psalmist commences by addressing Jehovah as the object of praise and prayer, and unto whom all vows should be paid. He predicts the return of all flesh to him who heareth prayer. He laments his own prevailing iniquities; but expresses his confidence, that the Lord will purge them all away. Then follows the language of the text, "Blessed is the man," &c.

Observe,

I. *The Good Man's Privileges.*

"He is chosen of God, and made to approach unto him."

1. He is chosen of God.

That is, elevated to the divine favor; the object of divine complacency. This privilege is,

(1) Of divine grace. It is not owing to any excellency in the object chosen; either intellectual or moral. Not because of any merit, or inherent righteousness. It is the exercise of that same grace which gave his Son to save the chief of sinners.

(2) This choice is in and through Christ. He looks upon them in the face of his Anointed One. In Christ we are accepted and beloved. It is only through the Mediator that we come to God, or that God comes to us; Eph. i. 6.

(3) This choice is through the medium and exercise of faith. Not that faith has any share of merit or excellency in itself: all its merit is derived from its object, Jesus Christ. But in unbelief we are far from God, and in that state, under his displeasure; John iii. 36. But by faith we are brought nigh by the blood of Christ; Eph. ii. 13. "By grace are ye saved, through faith;" Eph. ii. 8. And to as many as believed on him he gave privilege to become his sons; John i. 12.

2. He is caused to approach unto God.

That is, he has free access to God. God gives him holy desires for his presence and blessing. He draws him unto him by his sweet and holy influences. This approaching unto God will apply to secret devotion—to religious family exercises—and to the public services of his holy house. This approaching unto God is exceedingly honorable, truly delightful, and peculiarly profitable.

When we thus approach him, it should be with profound reverence, deep humility and with believing confidence.

Notice,

II. *The Good Man's Dwelling.*

"He dwells in God's courts." How very different to those who despise God's courts; to those who never enter them; and to those who merely enter them occasionally. The good man dwells in them. And this implies,

1. That his heart is there.

He loves the gates of Zion. This is the one pre-eminent object of his heart's desire

hat he may dwell in the house of the Lord, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his holy temple, Psal. xxvii. 4; cxxii. 1, &c. It implies

2. His presence, on all possible occasions, is there.

He does not forsake the house of his God. He sings:

> "I have been there, and oft would go;
> 'Tis like a little heaven below"

3. His influence is there.

The influence of his example, and the influence of his prayers. He seeks its good always. He prays for its peace, and labors for its prosperity. Notice,

III. *The Good Man's Satisfaction.*

"He is satisfied with the goodness of God's house." Not with his own goodness, or with the goodness of his services; but the goodness of the Lord in his holy temple. The goodness of the Lord's house is soul-satisfying. And it is so,

1. On account of its suitability.

Such as the soul needs Health, and life, and peace.

2. On account of its plenitude

> "Enough for all, enough for each,
> Enough for evermore."

"My God shall supply all your need," &c.

3. On account of its freeness.

No money, nor price; all who will, may take of the water of life freely. Consider,

IV. *The Good Man's Blessedness.*

"Blessed is the man," &c. Survey his privileges and blessings, and then contrast him,

1. With the slave of sin.
2. With the favorite of the world.
3. With the religious speculatist.

And then we must feel the force of the declaration: "Blessed is the man whom thou choosest," &c.

APPLICATION.

1. Let believers highly prize their privileges; improve, and be truly thankful for them. 2. Let the weary and heavy-laden sinner come to Jesus by faith, and obtain rest. 3. The votaries of the world must see, that their rock is not as our rock; themselves being judges.

SKETCH IX

DIVINE COMFORT

"As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you; and ye shall be comforted in Jerusalem."—*Isai.* lxvi. 13

THE Bible is, emphatically, the Christian's own book. It is his statute book, in which the laws of his God are recorded It is his directory through the dreary desert,

> "To Canaan's fair and happy land,
> Where his possessions lie."

It is his only book of true and solid comfort, where all the gracious declarations and all the precious promises of his heavenly Father are revealed. Yes; in the divine volume there is an abundance of consolation for the believing soul.

The text is a happy specimen of what God is to his people, and what he is disposed to do for them. "As one whom his mother comforteth," &c.

Let us consider, I. The Divine Source. II. The Peculiar Manner. And, III. The Appointed Place, of Christian Comfort.

I. *The Divine Source of Comfort.*

The Lord is the speaker in the passage before us. He alone can comfort Zion. He is "the God of all comfort." 2 Cor. i. 3. "Every good and perfect gift is from the Father of lights," &c. James i. 17 And if the Christian's comfort is from God, it will be distinguished,

1. For its superior excellency.

All his works and gifts are perfect. The comfort he imparts is pure, without alloy or mixture. It is solid, and not merely ideal; and is always suitable to the state and circumstances of its subjects. Divine comfort is distinguished,

2. For its sufficiency.

Enough to meet all the need of the soul; to satisfy all the desires of the heart; to banish every cloud, and annihilate every fear. Eph. iii. 20. Divine comfort is distinguished,

3. For its certainty.

"I will," is God's own declaration; and he cannot alter; he cannot lose ability; he cannot forget. Nothing can frustrate his designs His word is more firm and stable than the everlasting hills; for these shall be moved, but his declaration of comfort abideth forever and ever Divine comfort is distinguished.

4. For its perpetuity.

He will comfort his children in all places —at all times—and in every changing scene of life. He carries the young and tender lambs in his bosom, and gently leads those that are with young. He is with his people, to bear them unto old age, and to hoary hairs. He makes all their bed in their afflictions, is with them, to comfort them, when they pass through the valley and shadow of death; receives them to heaven, and wipes away all tears from their eyes; Ps. xxiii. 4; Isai. xliii. 2; Rev. vii. 17.

II. *The Peculiar Manner of Divine Comfort.*

"As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you." Strangers have often proved comforters. It is the part of friends to administer comfort. A brother's heart should abound with this. A father's soul is expected richly to possess it. But it is in the bosom of a mother that it reigns triumphant over every feeling. It is here that, like the majestic rolling spring-tide, it overflows all its banks and common boundaries. And therefore, God will comfort his children "as one whom his mother comforteth." It may signify,

1. With all the affection of a mother.

But even a mother's affection is too frail to express the love of God to his people. He says: "I have loved thee with an everlasting love," &c. He asks: "Can a woman forget her sucking child?" &c. She may: there have been some instances of it. "Yet," says he, "I will not forget *thee*," &c. Isai. xlix. 15.

2. With all the care and attention of a mother.

And what an amount of this presses upon the mother's heart! What wants to supply! what watchings! what assiduous care! what succor! &c., &c. Yet all this falls short of that care which numbers all his people's hairs, and bottles all their tears; and whose eyes are never withdrawn from the objects of his love. Psal. lvi. 8; Matt. x. 30.

3. With all the condescension and sacrifices of a mother.

How has he condescended to visit and to magnify his people! What arrangements has he made for their security! What a price for their ransom! "Did not spare his own Son;" Rom. viii. 32 Delivered him to deepest humiliation, pain and death, &c., that we might obtain the adoption of sons.

4. With all the forbearance of a mother.

How swift to caress, and sooth, and bless! How slow to punish! how ready to remove the chastening rod, &c.! Jer. xxxi. 18; Isai. xlix. 14. Observe,

III. *The Specified Place of Comfort.*

"And ye shall be comforted in Jerusalem."

Jerusalem was typical of the true church God can comfort in all places, and will do so; but he more specially sheds abroad his consolations on his spiritual Zion. This will appear, if you consider, that in the church there are,

1. The messengers of comfort;

To whom he says: "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God," &c. Isai. xl. 1, &c.

2. Here are the ordinances of comfort.

Reading of the divine word; offering up of prayer; songs of joy; gospel of salvation; the holy Supper, &c.

3. Here are the friends of comfort.

And it is their duty and delight to comfort and edify one another. "As iron sharpeneth iron," &c. "Two are better than one," &c. And then,

4. Here is the Spirit of comfort.

Yes, the Spirit dwells, as a Comforter, only in the church. And it is his holy and delightful work, to fill the hearts of God's children with peace and joy, through believing.

APPLICATION.

Learn, (1) The true subjects of divine comfort—the children of God. Those who bear his likeness, and possess his Spirit. To the wicked, there is no peace—no solid joy—no real comfort.

(2) True comfort only proceedeth from God. It is not in the creature. It is not in sin; nor in the world. All broken cisterns.

(3) True comfort is in the church. How sweet its fellowship! How numerous and precious its promises!

(4) Let the unhappy sinner come to God through his Son, that he may have established in his heart that kingdom which is "righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost."

SKETCH X.

THE SMITTEN ROCK.

"And the Lord said unto Moses, Go on before the people, and take with thee of the elders of Israel; and thy rod, wherewith thou smotest the river, take in thine hand, and go. Behold, I will stand before thee there upon the rock in Horeb; and thou shalt smite the rock, and there shall come water out of it, that the people may drink. And Moses did so in the sight of the elders of Israel."—*Exod* xvii. 5, 6.

THE passage refers to a very striking event in the history of the Israelites; the occasion of which, with all the circumstances, are fully detailed in the verses in connection with the text. The whole, however, had a typical allusion; and the apostle, referring to it, observes: "And did all (that is, our fathers) drink the same spiritual drink; for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ." 1 Cor. x. 4.

Observe, I. The Circumstances of the People. II. The Divine Directions given. And, III. The Results which followed.

I. *The Circumstances of the People.*

They were travelling through the desert, and were ready to perish of thirst. Their situation may be considered,

1. As extremely painful and dangerous. Body scorched with feverish heat; tongue parched; food impassable for want of necessary moisture; then, if not allayed, anxiety, restlessness, delirium, and certain death. It is enough to mark that the agony of the lost is thus represented in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, Luke xvi. 24. Their situation was,

2. Apparently hopeless.

Indeed, so far as human help was concerned, who could assist them? Who could unlock the clouds, or open the springs of the earth? Or, who could find an equivalent for the liquid of life? How applicable these thoughts to man's natural condition! Wretched, and without peace; far from God, and far from happiness; to what anxiety, restlessness, and peril is the sinner exposed! How equally helpless his state by human device, or by created energy! No arm, but his who first fashioned him, can renew in him that likeness, and restore that happiness, which sin has destroyed. Notice,

II. *The Divine Directions given.*

"And the Lord said unto Moses, Go on before the people." &c Here *three* things are specified: the rock, the rod; and the smiting.

1. The rock.

"Get thee there upon the rock in Horeb," &c. How unlikely, to bring the soft flowing liquid from the flinty rock! This rock was typical of the Saviour, and was a striking emblem,

(1) Of the Redeemer's lowly appearance. As the rock was barren, rugged and unsightly; so Christ, in his external appearance, was as a root out of a dry ground. "There was no beauty nor comeliness in him, that men should desire him." His birth-place, parentage, poverty, and disciples, all rendered him, to the Jews, a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence The rock was emblematical,

(2) Of his strength and stability. What is so strong and unyielding as the rock How unlike the gliding sand or the yielding earth! How it stands firm before the tempest's roughest blasts; and bears upon its rugged front the storm's most awful fury, unaffected and unmoved! Jesus possessed almighty power. His very word contained omnific energy, and silenced the winds, and hushed the storm to instant peace. Matt. viii. 25, &c. It was emblematical,

(3) Of his distinguished greatness and elevation. The rock is elevated above that which surrounds it. So Christ is higher, more majestic, than the sons of men. Heaven's celestial Prince. Over all, in his nature, titles, and works, God blessed for evermore. Rom. ix. 5; Heb i. The directions of Jehovah referred,

2. To the rod

"And the rod, wherewith thou smotest the river," &c. History of the rod is wonderful and interesting. Same rod that was changed into a serpent before the burning bush; that smote the waters of the Nile; and that was stretched over the Red Sea, when they divided &c. The direction to take the rod was intended,

(1) For his encouragement. To remind him of former miracles and mercies; to inspire his hope, &c.

(2) To express God's approbation of means. Rod not essentially necessary; God could easily have produced the event by different means, or without any means at all. But his wisdom suggested this How applicable to all divine institutions &c.

(3) To prefigure the plan of human re

demption. As the rock typified Christ, so the rod was an emblem of that heavy load of suffering which Christ should bear as the Saviour of the world. This leads us,

3. To the smiting.

"And thou shalt smite the rock," &c.

(1) The rod was to *smite* the rock. Not to wave over it, but to smite it. So was Christ smitten, not only typically, but really and truly, by men, by devils, and by the hand of divine justice. He was smitten in his name, in his reputation, in his body, and in his soul. Isai. liii. 3–10; Luke xxii. 63, &c.

(2) The rod smote by divine authority. "So it pleased the Father to bruise him," &c. His Father cried: "Awake, O sword, against my shepherd," &c. "*Smite* the shepherd," &c. Zech. xiii. 7.

(3) The rock was to be smitten before the elders. "And take with thee of the elders of Israel." How applicable to the sufferings of Christ! The elders were concerned in the *price* paid to his apostate disciple; in his trial, condemnation, death, &c.

(4) It was smitten for the benefit of the people. So Christ was delivered for our sins; and suffered, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God.

(5) The smiting was immediately followed by the gushing stream. So Christ's sufferings terminated with the piercing of his side, from whence flowed *blood* and *water;* the emblems of the medium and price of our redemption.

This leads us to consider,

III. *The Results which followed.*

A crystal stream burst forth from the rock, which satisfied their thirst, and thus preserved them from perishing. The supply thus provided was,

1. Supernatural.

No connection between the means and the end; between the rod, the rock, and the smiting, with the miraculous effects produced. Redemption, from first to last, from its origin to its consummation, is a miracle of wisdom, power, and grace. The supply was,

2. Abundant.

Enough for all the people. So, salvation's streams are sufficient for the world; for every creature. The supply was,

3. Lasting.

It never failed them; but they drank of the stream which followed them, until they entered the promised land. So the blessings of the grace of Christ meet all the need of God's people here; and shall never fail until the desert is exchanged for that happy land,

"Where rocks, and hills, and brooks, and vales
With milk and honey flow."

APPLICATION.

From this subject we see,

(1) Our naturally miserable state.

(2) The provisions made for us. And,

(3) The application necessary to their enjoyment.

"If any man thirst," says the blessed Redeemer, "let him come to me, and drink," &c.

SKETCH XI.

DIVINITY OF CHRIST.

"And of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed forever Amen" —*Rom.* ix. 5.

GREAT diversity of sentiment is held concerning the person of Christ. *Sabellians* deny the distinctions of the Godhead, and say the whole deity tabernacled in Christ. *Arians* represent him as the highest of all created intelligences, the first-born of every creature. *Socinians* acknowledge him as human only, and as exalted above other men merely in his official character. It has, however, been generally believed in every age of the church, that Christ is divine, truly the only-begotten Son of God; the brightness of the divine glory, and the express image of his person, and in every sense equal with the Father.

This sentiment appears to be abundantly established in the holy word, and to be the obvious sense of the text, "Who is over all, God blessed forever." Taking the text as expressive of the proper deity of the Saviour, let us consider the basis on which this doctrine rests. It appears grounded,

I. *On the Explicit Declarations of the Divine Word.*

The name JEHOVAH is universally allowed to be the peculiar and incommunicable name of God. It is used in reference to Christ.

1. By *Isaiah.* "Mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts:" vi. 1–5 See John xii 41 where this is applied to

Christ. Also xlv 21 to end, compared with Rom. xiv. 9. Also xl. 3, compared with Matt. iii. 3. It is also used,

2. By *Joel.* "And it shall come to pass, that whoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be delivered;" ii. 32, compared with Acts ii. 21–36.

3. By *Paul.* "God was manifest in the flesh;" 1 Tim. iii. 16. "Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour," &c. Tit. ii. 13.

4. By *John.* "This is the true God, and eternal life;" 1 John v. 20. "And the word was God;" John i. 1.

There are many other passages where he is described as "God only wise," "the only true God," &c.

His proper deity appears,

II. *From the Unalienable Attributes of God which are ascribed to him.*

1. Eternity is proper to God, yet applied to Christ.

He said, "Before Abraham was, I AM." Here both eternity and self-existence are included. See Exod. iii. 14. "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come;" Rev. i. 8.

2. Immutability or unchangeableness is proper to God, yet applied to Christ.

"Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and forever," including time past, present, and future; Heb. xiii. 8. "Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever," &c.; Heb. i. 8.

3. Almighty power is applied to Christ.

"Who is, and who was, and is to come, the Almighty;" Rev. i. 8. "We give thee thanks, O Lord God Almighty;" Rev. xi. 17.

4. Omniscience and infinite knowledge are ascribed to Christ.

"In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge;" Col. ii. 3. He knew the thoughts of his disciples, and of his enemies, and of all men; Rev. ii. 23; John ii. 24. His proper deity appears,

III. *From the Works which are ascribed to him.*

1. Creation.

"All things were made by him," &c.; John i 2. "For by him were all things created," &c.; Col. i. 16. "By whom also he created the worlds;" Heb. i. 2.

2. Works of providence and universal government

"By him all things consist." "He upholdeth all things by the word of his power;" Col. i. 17. "He is King of kings and Lord of lords;" "All things are given into his hands."

3 Work of salvation.

He is the world's Redeemer; he forgives sin; Acts v. 31: Eph. i. 7. His blood sanctifies; 1 John i. 7. He bestows eternal life; John x. 28. He will raise the dead, and judge the world; John v 21–22; xxvii. 8, &c.; Rom. xiv. 10, &c His proper divinity appears,

IV. *From the Worship and Divine Honors he receives.*

When on earth we have several striking instances of this.

1. Eastern sages worshipped him; Matt. ii. 11.

2. Woman of Canaan, and man born blind; Matt. xv. 25; John ix. 31.

3. The disciples, also, worshipped him Matt. xxiii. 9, 17.

4. Devils also Case of demoniac, Matt. viii. 28.

5. Angels. At his birth. "When God bringeth in his first-begotten, he saith, Let all the angels of God worship him;" Heb i. 6.

6. An innumerable host in heaven; Rev v. 13, &c. It also appears,

V. *From the Claims he made of Equality with the Father*

1. He claimed equal possessions.

"All things that the Father hath are mine;" John xvi. 15.

2. Equal glory.

"Now, O Father, glorify me with the glory I had with thee before the world was;" John xvii. 5

3. Equal honor and obedience.

"That all men should honor the Son, even as they honor the Father;" John v. 23. See also Phil. ii. 5, 6, 7, &c

APPLICATION

Learn, (1) The glory of the Saviour's person.

(2) What confidence and comfort are afforded to his humble followers.

Their Lord is able to do for them all they can possibly require. No insufficiency in Christ—no change—no failure None can perish who rely on him.

(3) What homage he has a right to claim.

"Jesus is worthy to receive
Honor and power divine;
And blessings more than we can give,
Be, Lord, forever thine"

"Let all who dwell above the sky,
And earth, and air, and seas,
Conspire to raise thy glories high,
And spread thine endless praise."

(4) How terrible he will be to those who reject the overtures of his grace.

"How will their hearts endure
The terrors of that day,
When earth and heaven before his face
Astonished shrink away!"

(5) To the humble penitent he says: "Him that cometh unto me I will in no-wise cast out."

SKETCH XII.

TRIAL OF ABRAHAM

"And it came to pass after these things, that God did tempt Abraham, and said unto him, Abraham: and he said, Behold, here I am. And he said, Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt-offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of."—*Gen.* xxii. 1, 2.

THE word tempt properly signifies, to try or prove: and the scene before us was intended to try the greatness of Abraham's love to, and faith in, God. He had displayed great trust in the Lord on previous occasions, but he was now to be tried, by being subjected to one of the severest sacrifices that God ever demanded from man.

The passage before us presents, I. The Command of God. II. The Obedience of Abraham. And, III. The Final Result.

I. *The Command of God.*

"Take now thy Son," &c. Observe,

1. The object referred to.

"Thy son." Not his bullocks or rams, not a servant; but his son. "Thine only son Isaac." Not Ishmael, the son of the bondwoman; but Isaac, the only son of Sarah, the child of his old age.

2. The duty enjoined.

"And offer him for a burnt-offering." It would have been hard for him to have devoted him to a life of solitude; but how much more severe to take away his life; and that, too, with his own hand! Not allowed to depute another to perform this work of blood. And to offer him as a burnt-offering, by which he would be reduced to ashes by the consuming flame Observe,

3. The almost insuperable difficulties connected with this command.

What might Abraham have pleaded against the performance of this solemn command?

(1) It was strange and unprecedented. Nothing like it had ever proceeded out of the mouth of the Lord. Sacrifices of beasts had been enjoined; but of presenting a human sacrifice there was no example, &c.

(2) It was directly opposed to the feelings of our common humanity. And have not these feelings been planted within us by God? And are they not worthy of him who has implanted them? But here is a command at perfect variance with them—a command that is to do the greatest violence to them—by shedding the blood of man; and that man an only son.

(3) It was a violation of the divine law; Gen. ix. 5.

(4) It would annihilate all his hopes in reference to the long-promised seed. It was counter to all God's promises and solemn declarations on this subject; and thus, when the long-expected and prayed-for dawn had appeared, to throw around him the most palpable and utter darkness.

(5) It would destroy all his domestic comfort. How would Sarah bear the tidings? From that hour, desolation, mourning, and wo would be written on the walls of his dwelling.

(6) It would render him odious to all around him. How could he clear his character, and wash out from his hands the stains of blood? Would he not be received, however he might attempt to defend his conduct, as a murderer of the most barbarous description?

These were some of the difficulties connected with the duty enjoined. Notice,

II. *The Obedience of Abraham.*

"And Abraham rose up early," &c. His obedience,

1. Was prompt.

He hesitates not—seeks no delay—requires no time for consideration; but as it is likely he received the solemn command during the darkness of the night, so he rises early in the morning, and makes preparation for its execution

2. It was deliberate.

Whatever anguish might be felt within

there was no confusion in his manner. His servants are engaged—the wood prepared—the ass saddled—and the journey commenced.

3. It was persevering.

The journey was one of three days' length. During the whole of this time Isaac was before his eyes. What time for reflection—for doubt—for abandoning the project! Besides, there was Isaac's distressing interrogatory: "Behold the fire, and the wood, but where is the lamb?" &c. And there would, also, be the address to his son, before he was bound; for he was now near thirty years of age. How he would have to relate to him all God's conduct towards himself, in calling him from his own country—in giving him such glorious promises—then their delay; last of all, by miracle, his own conception and birth, as the fulfilment of them—the joy it produced—how it strengthened faith, brightened hope, and increased his joy; and now the very mysterious, unheard-of, and to all human appearance the blighting command, to slay that son of promise! How his heart would heave with emotion, and his eyes be suffused with bitterest tears, in the recital of this mysterious history! Isaac listens—submits—is bound—stretched upon the rude altar; and now, the knife is raised to pierce the heart of his child! when a voice is heard: "Abraham, Abraham, lay not thine hand upon the lad," &c. This leads us,

III. *To the Final Result.*

1. Isaac is spared.

Given back as from the dead.

2. A sacrifice is provided.

"A ram caught," &c.; ver. 13.

3. Abraham is graciously distinguished for his faith and supreme love to God; ver. 16.

4. The promises are renewed; ver. 17.

5 God is glorified in and by the whole.

APPLICATION.

Learn, 1. The nature of true and acceptable obedience. To do whatsoever God commands.

2. The principle of true obedience. Faith in God.

3 The power of saving faith in the sacrifices it freely makes.

4. The reward of true obedience.

5. The subject directs us to Jesus Christ. To him who was delivered up of his Father for our sins, who shed his blood for our redemption; for whom no substitute was found; against whom, as the good Shepherd, the sword of justice did awake and pierce through and through, that he might give eternal life unto his sheep. He ascended the same mount—bore his cross—and was truly offered as a propitiatory offering for the world; 1 John ii. 2; Heb ix

SKELETON XII.

SCRIPTURE CHARACTERS

No. 1. Enoch.

"Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him."—*Gen.* v. 24.

Scripture biography is highly interesting and instructive. Always faithful and impartial. Designed for our spiritual advantage—that we may imitate the excellencies of God's people, and avoid their errors. Generally concise: the pious and useful career of distinguished individuals often presented to our notice in a single paragraph. This applies, especially, to the subject under consideration. Enoch's history and character are summed up in a few verses; yet his name will be fragran to the church of God to the end of time.

Notice, I. Enoch's piety. "He walked with God." And, II. His Distinguished Removal. "He was not; for God took him."

I. *Enoch's Piety.*

"He walked with God."

Human life is often represented as a course or way; and the practices of men are spoken of, as walking in these ways. We read of the way of sinners—of the scorner—of fools—of transgressors, &c Also, the way of the upright—the ways of wisdom, &c. Also, of walking in connection with God. Sometimes, walking before God; as in Abraham; Gen. xvii. 1. Walking in God's sight; Isai. ii. 5. In reference to Enoch (and the same is said of Noah) "Walking with God." This walking with God includes,

1. A true knowledge of God.

Of his character and laws, of his will concerning us, &c. "This is life eternal, to know thee, the true God." All sound religion is based on knowledge. We can not rightly worship, serve, and love an un

known God; Prov. i. 7; xv. 14; 2 Cor. v. 6. It includes,

2. Reconciliation to God.

"Can two walk together, except they be agreed?" Amos iii. 3. It includes the cessation of all hostility on the part of the sinner, and that he becomes of one mind with Jehovah. In Jesus, alone, can this be effected. He is the only meeting-place. In that gift God expresses his love to man; and in coming to him, and exercising faith upon him, the soul evinces love and confidence towards God. It includes,

3. Cheerful obedience to the commands of God.

Obedience is the true test of a right heart—the only sound knowledge, and the only evidence, of living faith. "Hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments;" 1 John ii. 3. It includes,

4. Devotional intercourse with God.

In meditation—prayer—praise. Psal. xlii. 2; lxxxiv. 2. It includes,

5. Assimilation to the holy image of God.

Constant intercourse will elevate the soul to the divine likeness. This is clearly expressed; 2 Cor. iii. 18 It includes,

6. Advancement in all the things of God.

"He walked." Went onwards; left the things which were behind, and pressed towards those which were before. His knowledge became clearer, faith stronger, hope brighter, love warmer, obedience more complete, character more and more spiritual, &c.

Walking with God is associated with, (1) True dignity. (2) Real pleasure. (3) Permanent security. And, (4) Eternal advantages.

II. *His distinguished Removal.*

"He was not: for God took him."

The Apostle, in his Epistle to the Hebrews, fully illustrates this part of the subject; for he says, "God translated him, that he should not see death." Heb. xi. 5, &c.

1. "He was not."

That is, no more among men.

(1) He was not allowed to remain in a troublesome and ungodly world.

(2) He was not subjected to the, otherwise, universal stroke of mortality. Exempted from disease, death, and corruption.

2. "God took him."

(1) In a peculiar way. Body and soul unseparated. No doubt some change equivalent to death; but without its pain and degradation; and without the body seeing corruption.

(2) God took him to himself; to his own immediate presence, "where is fulness of joy," &c.

(3) God took him; and thus signalized and honored distinguished piety. He had chosen God, believed in his name, obeyed his will, lived in close and cheerful communion with him, &c. Now, he is taken into closer fellowship with God; where the intercourse may be full, constant, uninterrupted, and eternal.

APPLICATION.

Learn, 1. The nature of true piety. To walk with God. 2. The reward of true piety. Interested in God's gracious care; and ultimately raised to his own divine presence. "Beloved, now are we the sons of God," &c. 3. Removal of Enoch. Might be intended to teach the immortality of the soul, the resurrection of the body and the final glorification of both, in the heavenly world.

SKELETON XIII.

THE LORD'S SUPPER.

"For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, that the Lord Jesus, the same night in which he was betrayed, took bread," &c.—1 *Cor.* xi. 23–26.

The holy ordinance of the Supper has been in high estimation by the followers of Christ, in every age of the church. The first Christians frequently attended to its celebration; indeed, it seems to have been the principal object of their meeting together, Acts xx. 7. In our days it has been abused in two different, indeed in two opposite ways. By some it has been considered as the substance of religion, to the neglect of a true, living faith, and obedient walk before God; others have treated it with neglect, and have excused themselves on the ground that they viewed it as a mere ceremony. The enlightened Christian considers it an ordinance of God, one bearing the impress of Divine authority, intimately connected with the grand leading doctrines of Christianity, and truly adapted to promote his growth in holiness

and joy. Let us ascertain what estimate the apostle puts upon it in the text. He represents it,

I. *As a Divine Ordinance.*

'For I have received of the Lord that which I also delivered," &c. It was instituted immediately by Jesus, and enjoined by his divine authority. A service may be striking, splendid, and perhaps useful; but it cannot be binding, unless it is based on the direct authority of God. Being thus sanctioned, it is obligatory on all who profess his name. He represents it,

II. *As a symbolical Ordinance.*

"Took bread," &c.

The symbols are, bread and wine; the one referring to the Saviour's body, and the other to his precious blood. The breaking of the bread refers to the bruising of his sacred person; the pouring out of the wine, to the blood shed for our redemption. The eating of the bread, and the drinking of the cup, refer to our actual participation of the benefits of the Saviour's death. We must thus eat his flesh, and drink his blood, that we may live, and ultimately attain to everlasting life. John vi. 56.

III. *It is a commemorative Ordinance.*

We are directed by Christ to do it "in remembrance of him." To keep up a lively remembrance of the Saviour; of his person—of his love—of his sufferings; especially of their end and design, and of our deep interest in them, and the duties which devolve upon us through them. Luke xxii. 19. He describes it,

IV. *As a professional Ordinance.*

In this we "do show forth the Lord's death," that is, we keep up the remembrance of that event in the world; we show our faith in it—our hope through it—our love and obedience to Christ—our separation and distinction from those who disbelieve, despise, or neglect it.

V. *It is the Christian's social Ordinance.*

Unlike secret duties, when we retire into solitude. Also unlike the public means, where saints and sinners, professors and profane, mingle indiscriminately. It is the family ordinance for all of the household of faith; for all those who are the spiritual kindred of the Saviour. Mark iii. 35. It is represented in this passage.

VI. *As a perpetual Ordinance.*

"Ye do show the Lord's death *till he come.*" From his first to his second coming, the gospel is to be preached; salvation's streams are to flow, prayer is to be continued, and the death of the Saviour is to be perpetuated. This sacrifice retains all its virtue and efficacy, and shall be accessible to all believing sinners, until he shall come the second time, without a sin-offering, unto the eternal salvation of his people

APPLICATION.

1. Who should approach the Lord's table? All sensible believing sinners. 2. In what way? In the spirit of self-abasement; love to the Saviour, and to mankind; and in the exercise of trust in the sacrifice of Christ. 3. What benefits may we expect to receive? Increased strength; comfort, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost; and a greater meetness for the fellowship of heaven

SKELETON XIV.

THE POT OF MANNA.

"The golden pot that had manna."—*Heb.* ix. 4

THE apostle is describing the tabernacle with its variety of furniture, with a design to show its typical reference to the second and better covenant. It is obvious that the priests, sacrifices, and utensils of the tabernacle, and afterwards of the temple, were intended to shadow forth the author, medium, and blessings of the Christian dispensation. In reference to the manna, Jesus has applied it to himself, where he says, "I am the true bread of life," &c. Let us notice the manna, and then the golden pot in which it was contained Observe,

I. *The Manna.*

The history of it is given in Exod. xvi 11, &c. We shall especially consider it in its typical reference to Christ. Notice

1. Its name.

Which signifies to prepare or appoint which applies very forcibly to Christ, who was the prepared Redeemer—the appointed of the Father, to be the sacrifice for sin

2. Its source.

It was given from heaven, &c. Jesus, who had dwelt in the bosom of the Father in the highest heavens, descended from thence that he might be the life of the world.

3. Its nature.

(1) Small in appearance. Exod. xvi

4. So Christ was "a root out of a dry ground, made himself of no reputation, but took on him the form of a servant," &c.

(2) Form of it was round, denoting the perfection and fulness of Christ.

(3) Color of it was white, setting forth the unspotted purity of his nature.

(4) Taste of it peculiarly sweet, like wafers made with honey. All connected with the Saviour is sweet to the spiritual mind. Observe,

4. How the manna was given.

(1) Freely. They had no claim, no demand, upon God, for this heavenly provision; it was the result of his own free mercy and grace. So Christ was freely given for our salvation. It was given,

(2) Plentifully. It fell in rich abundance, so as to meet all their wants. Gospel feast is plentifully stored, enough for the whole of Adam's perishing posterity. It was given,

(3) In double quantities, on the evening preceding the Sabbath, probably intended to refer to the more copious outpouring of divine influences in the latter days.

(4) It never failed them so long as they remained in the wilderness. So Christ in his benefits will be the never-failing support of our souls in this life, our hope in death, and our salvation forever. Observe,

5. The way in which it was to be received.

(1) The place where it was to be obtained. "Round about the camp." So Christ is to be found in the ordinances of religion, and in the means of grace.

(2) It was to be gathered daily. So we must always live by faith on the Son of God, &c.

(3) It was to be gathered early. So Christ is to be sought first, principally, first in order of time, first every day. In all things to have both the preference and pre-eminence.

(4) It might be gathered by all. No restriction, it was free to the whole; so Jesus is the Saviour of the world, and tasted death for every man. Notice,

6. The manner in which it was to be used.

(1) It was to be ground in mills, and baked with fire. So Christ had to suffer both in body and soul, that he might be the life of the world.

(2) It was to be eaten; and only thus would it satisfy their craving desires. In like manner we must actually participate of the redemption which is in Christ. We must "eat his flesh, and drink his blood."

(3) All of it was to be eaten; signifying that we must receive a whole Christ, in all his offices, works, and benefits. Notice,

II. *The golden Pot in which it was contained*—

May be applied,

1. To the divine word;

Which is more precious than gold, and which is the "word of Christ," every part of which is full of him.

2. To the holy ordinances;

Where he is so strikingly exhibited. As baptism—the Lord's supper—prayer—praise, &c.

3. To the preached gospel;

Where Christ is the Alpha and Omega, the all and in all.

4. To the believer's heart,

Which is made pure and precious by the sanctifying blood of the cross, and where he abides as the sovereign of the soul, and the hope of glory.

5. To the holiest place;

Where he ever dwells in all his glory as the infinite source of all the blessedness of the heavenly world.

APPLICATION

1. Let us be thankful for this heavenly bread. 2. Receive it with all cordiality and joy. 3. Constantly seek it in those means where his presence and blessing are promised. 4. Despisers of Christ must starve and die.

SKELETON XV

THE CRY OF THE PERISHING

"Lord, save us: we perish."—*Matt.* viii. 25.

THE Saviour's numerous engagements through the day. Sermon, miracles, &c.—All of a benevolent character—nature exhausted—enters a small ship—storm—imminent danger—the Saviour fast asleep—disciples—alarmed, awake Jesus—and exclaim, "Lord, save us; we perish"—and he arose, rebuked the storm, and behold there was an instantaneous calm. Apply the passage to a spiritual purpose. Observe,

I. *Man is in a Perishing Condition.*

This is evident.

1. From the express declaration of the word of God.

"All we like sheep have gone astray," &c. All men are concluded in a state of unbelief. "He that believeth not is condemned already." 'O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself," &c.

2. It is evident from his true state and condition.

Wretched, hungering, blind, naked, poor, diseased, condemned, &c.

3. This perishing involves eternal and irreparable consequences.

"These shall go away into everlasting punishment," &c. "The second and the eternal death." "Where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched," &c.

II. *Salvation is of the Lord.*

"Lord, save us." They went to the right source. No other voice could have effected the instant calm; and Christ is the only Saviour of sinners from the storms of eternal wo. Salvation is of the Lord,

1. In its origin.

He contrived the plan. His eye saw—his heart pitied—his arm brought salvation. It is of the Lord,

2. In its execution.

He became the surety, bore the curse, endured the shame, drank the cup, suffered the just for the unjust, &c.

3. In its bestowment.

From what other source did it ever flow? Who saved the woman who was a sinner—Zaccheus the extortioner—the dying malefactor—Saul the persecutor, &c.? Jesus saved each and all of them; and all who ever were saved in every age and country have received it from his gracious hands, for

"None but Jesus, none but Jesus,
Can do helpless sinners good."

"No other name," &c. Acts iv. 12. "To whom shall we go, but unto thee," &c. John vi. 48. "All the redeemed in heaven ascribe the glory and praise to him," &c.

III. *Application to Christ is Necessary to secure this Salvation.*

It must be the application,

'. Of sincere repentance.

"Repent ye, and be converted," &c. 'Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish," &c. "God commandeth all men everywhere to repent," &c Luke xiii. 13; Acts xvii. 30. It must be the application.

2. Of importunate prayer.

"Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord," &c. Rom. x. 13. "Ask, and it shall be given," &c. Thus the publican prayed; thus it was said of Saul, and thus the disciples in the text, 'Lord save us; we perish," &c. It must be,

3. The application of vigorous faith.

"If we confess with our mouth, and believe with our heart," &c. Faith lays hold of the Saviour, relies upon him, and draws healing virtue from his bleeding wounds; Rom. iii. 28; Eph. ii. 8; Mark xvi. 16; John iii. 6, &c.

IV. *Such Application to Christ shall never fail.*

Why? Because,

1. It is his own appointment.

He must honor it; truth, righteousness and faithfulness demand it.

2. It is his delight to save.

What astounding proofs has he given of this, especially on the cross!

3. He never allowed the believing applicant to perish.

If so, when? in what age or country? or of what grade or enormity of guilt? All who ever applied, however vile, were graciously received; and never did he spurn a humble, contrite, trembling sinner from his throne. He delighteth in mercy and is a God ready to pardon.

APPLICATION.

1. Some sinners know not their perilous condition. How pitiable! 2. Some know it, but are trifling and careless. What infatuation—what hardihood—what madness! 3. Some are now seeking. What encouragement there is for them! The Lord will hear and deliver them. 4. Some are saved. Their feet are now upon the rock, &c.; let them rejoice, and bless the God of their salvation.

SKELETON XVI

PRAYER.

'Lord, teach us to pray."—*Luke* xi. 1

PRAYER is the duty of dependent creatures. Those who are self-sufficient do not need it. It is one of those signs which have ever distinguished the people of God. How desirable that we so understand it, as to excel in its holy and

happy exercises! Its true spirit is from above; we cannot acquire it from men, or by mental research and skill. The disciples, convinced of this, said to Jesus: 'Lord, teach us to pray."

I. *What is Prayer?*

It is the presenting of our requests to God, either verbally or by lifting up our hearts to him, and breathing out our desires before him. In prayer,

1. The heart must be the agent.

Without this, lip service will be an abomination to the Lord. Sincerity and earnestness must distinguish all our approaches to the throne of grace. Prov. xxviii. 9; xv. 8.

2. God is the object of prayer.

None else is possessed of those attributes which the Being whom we worship should possess; infinite knowledge—almighty power—unbounded goodness—omnipresence, &c. Ps. lxv. 2.

3. Christ Jesus is the only medium of prayer.

He is the way to the Father; by him we have access; we must ask all things in his name, and expect all through his merits, &c. He is the mediator between God and us, &c.

4. Prayer must be our constant exercise.

We ever stand in need—God is ever ready to bless—prayer is the appointed medium of communication. Eph. vi. 18.

II. *Why should we desire to be taught how to pray?*

1. Because of the importance of prayer.

Prayer moves the hand that moves all things. To be distinguished for prayer is the highest distinction we can receive. To be thus exercised is the safest, happiest, and most profitable of all employments.

We should desire to learn to pray,

2. Because of our natural ignorance of this duty.

We know not how to pray, or what to pray for, as we ought, &c.

3. Because God desires us to be proficient in this duty.

"Open your mouths wide," &c. If ye have not, it is because ye ask not, or because ye ask amiss.

III. *Why should we desire the Lord to Teach us how to Pray?*

1. Because he was distinguished for his holy exercise.

He prayed in public and in private—when he preached or wrought miracles when he was baptized, tempted, and transfigured; and his dying breath was employed in prayer. Who then so fit to teach us how to pray?

2. Because he is our Master, and in all things we ought to hear him.

He has taught us how to act in times of trouble, persecution, and adversity; how to act towards our friends and enemies. And he has taught us, likewise, how to pray: "When ye pray, say after this manner," &c. Luke xi. 2, &c.

3. Because with him is the Spirit of prayer

That Spirit which he promised to send as a Comforter is also a Spirit of prayer "For the Spirit itself maketh intercession," &c. Rom. viii. 26; Zech. xii. 10.

4. Because he is our great High Priest;

"Who ever liveth to make intercession for us." He presents our prayers—removes their imperfections—he offers them with the fragrant incense of his own merits—and thus renders them effectual. Rev viii. 3.

APPLICATION.

(1) Let us cultivate the gift of prayer. (2) Covet the true spirit of prayer; 1 Cor. vii. 5. (3) Commence and conduct all our affairs in connection with prayer; Philip iv. 6. (4) Continue instant in prayer Luke xviii. 1. (5) In the exercise of faith look for the returns of prayer

SKELETON XVII

THE SAINTS' ESTIMATE OF THE WORD OF GOD

"I love thy commandments above gold; yea, above fine gold."—*Psalm* cxix. 127

A GREAT portion of this extensive and interesting psalm is taken up in expressing the writer's attachment to the word of God. He speaks of it under a variety of terms: such as law, precepts, statutes testimonies, and, in our text commandments. He expresses the highest esteem for and attachment to them. "I love thy commandments above gold," &c. Observe

I. *The Supreme Excellency of the Holy Scriptures.*

This will be evident if we consider,

1. Their heavenly origin.

Here called the law of God—law of his mouth, &c. See 2 Tim. iii. 16, 17.

2. Great antiquity.

The oldest book in existence. Its records embrace the creation of the world, &c

3. Their miraculous preservation.

They have been hated and held in utter detestation by thousands; yet have they been preserved amidst all the revolutions of time, and handed down from generation to generation, even until now.

4. Their glorious revelations.

Concerning man—in his original state, depravity, as redeemed, &c.; concerning God—his perfections, works, mind; concerning Jesus—his offices, death, resurrection, &c.; concerning life, death, and immortality; concerning judgment, heaven, and hell: in short, concerning all which relates to man's present or eternal safety and happiness.

Notice,

II. *The Saint's Estimate of them.*

"I love thy commandments above gold," &c.

Gold is the most precious of metals, and is distinguished for its rarity, weight, brightness, and value; and in these respects may be a fit emblem of the Holy Scriptures.

But gold,

1. Is in its nature earthly and material.

The word of God, heavenly and spiritual.

2. Gold only confers on its possessor temporal benefits.

The word of God, eternal benefits.

3. Gold in its nature mutable and perishing.

The word of our God abideth forever.

But how do saints prove their attachment to the Scriptures?

(1) By a diligent perusal of them; Isa. xxxiv. 16; 1 Tim. iv. 13.

(2) By making them the subject of meditation. "I will meditate in thy precepts," &c.; ver. 15. "In thy law I will meditate day and night," &c.

(3) By a profession of the doctrines they exhibit. "With my lips have I declared all the judgments of thy mouth;" ver. 13.

(4) By subjection to their authority, and practical attention to the precepts they enforce; ver. 32–35, 168. "Doers of the word;" Jas. i. 22. They run in the way of God's commands, &c.

(5) By spreading abroad the blessed truths they contain. "I will speak of thy testimonies before kings," &c.; Psalm cxix. 46.

III. *The Advantage of Cordial Attachment to the Word of God.*

1. Increasing knowledge.

"Thou, through thy commandments, hast made me wiser than mine enemies;" ver. 91. "I understand more than the ancients, because I keep thy precepts," &c.; ver. 100. "Able to make thee wise," &c.; 2 Tim. iii. 15, 16.

2. Increasing holiness.

"Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee;" ver. 11. "Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way," &c.; ver. 9. See also ver. 1–3.

3. Increasing happiness.

"Thy statutes have been my songs," &c.; ver. 54. "Great peace have they who love thy law;" ver. 165. "I have rejoiced in the way of thy testimonies," &c. "This is my comfort in my affliction," &c.; ver. 50. "They are my heritage, and rejoicing of my heart;" &c. 111

APPLICATION.

(1) How grateful should we be for the divine word! Especially that we have the whole canon, the volume complete; law, prophets, gospels, and epistles. Let them be the rule of our life—the directory of our faith—the joy of our souls. (2) How unwise to neglect this blessed book! to be ignorant amidst the meridian blaze of gospel light. (3) There is no other true guide to immortality and eternal life.

SKELETON XVIII

THE DIVINE FAMILY

"Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named."—*Eph.* iii. 15.

THE church of Christ is represented under a variety of interesting similitudes. It is a flock—a vineyard or garden—an army—a family. There cannot be a more beautiful emblem than the last mentioned and it is one frequently employed by the

sacred writers. It is necessarily implied in those passages where God represents himself as the Father of his people, and where believers are represented as brethren; thus God says, "And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty;" 2 Cor. vi. 18. Let us observe,

I. Of whom the divine family is composed. II. In what respects the two parts in heaven and earth are one. III. Make some remarks on its future union and consummation. Let us observe,

I. *Of whom the Divine Family is composed.*

It must be observed that the text represents it as existing both in heaven and earth. God's family embraces all his saints or holy ones; part of whom are in heaven, and part on earth. Let us notice the two branches distinctly.

1. The family in heaven embraces,

(1) An innumerable host of spiritual intelligences, denominated angels—seraphim—cherubim—thrones—principalities, &c., also called sons, saints, &c. See Deut. xxxiii. 2; Jude 14; Job xxxviii. 7.

(2) The souls of all who have died in the faith. From the righteous Abel to the present hour. "For to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord."

(3) All the spirits of those who have died in infancy. We feel satisfied of the happiness of these; (1) Because accountability implies trust, capacity, &c.; these never entered upon this trust, never possessed this capacity; therefore, do not fall under the penalty of the wicked. (2) Because for all original guilt, there is an ample remedy in Christ's all-sufficient sacrifice. (3) Because Jesus received such, and blessed them, and declared that "of such is the kingdom of heaven;" Matt. xix. 14. (4) Because the divine mercy is over all his works; but if infants perish, this declaration is not correct.

2. The divine family on earth is composed of all true believers. They may differ materially in knowledge, talents, gracious attainments, &c.; "but to as many as received him, gave he power to become the sons of God," &c.; John i. 12

II. *In what Respects the two Branches in Heaven and Earth are but one Family.*

1. They have only one head.

Jesus is the head of the body, the church. So he is the head of principalities and powers; he is Lord of all; see Eph. i. 22; Col. ii. 10.

2. They have one distinguishing nature

And that is holiness; with this difference, that those in heaven are made perfect, while those on earth are advancing towards it; Rev. vii. 13.

3. They have one employment.

To bless and adore him who sitteth on the throne, and the Lamb forever. To obey the divine commands, and to exhibit his spirit, whose they are and whom they serve; Rev. v. 11.

4. They are one in interest and affection.

There is no hostility between them; the branch on earth hold intercourse with them by holy desires and devout meditations, and anticipate a final indissoluble union. The branch in heaven minister to the saints on earth, rejoice in their happiness, encamp round about them in danger, and when they die, bear them on their wings to glory; Heb. i. 14; Heb. xii. 22. Let us,

III. *Make some Remarks on its future Union and Consummation.*

Both branches shall be joined, and in one holy place they shall spend an eternity together. Notice,

1. The time of this union and consummation.

After the termination of Christ's reign upon earth; the judgment, &c. See whole of Rev. xxi. and xxii.

2. The great number of this family.

How innumerable, &c.! Of every age, country, and dispensation; patriarchs—prophets—apostles—martyrs—confessors—Jews and Gentiles—bond and free; of every color, and nation, and people, and kindred; Rev. vii. 9; Matt. viii. 1.

3. The moral and intellectual character of this family.

All bright and unerring in knowledge, burning with love—without spot or wrinkle, &c.; Rev. xxi. 27. Notice,

4. Its perfect happiness.

Every cause of grief and misery removed—presence of all good—pleasures for evermore; Rev. xxii. 1–5. Notice,

5. Its eternal permanence.

No divisions, breaches, changes, nor death—life eternal—unfading crown—incorruptible inheritance—pleasures for evermore.

APPLICATION.

(1) How desirable to be members of this divine family! What privileges here, what glory hereafter! (2) How easy the mode! by believing on the name of the Son of God. (3) If the church is one family, how love and peace should be promoted; the unity of the spirit kept in the bonds of peace! (4) Let us invite poor aliens to the joys and blessings of gospel adoption.

SKETCH XIII.

EVANGELICAL PREACHING

"We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake."—2 *Cor.* iv. 5.

WORK of the ministry most solemn and important. The highest office to which we can be exalted. Such are laborers together with God, and are identified with Jesus in that great work which he shed his precious blood to accomplish. If the office is great, so the responsibilities are truly momentous. How desirable to be rightly furnished for the holy calling; and so to labor in it, that we may make full proof of our ministry, that at last we may receive from the hand of the Great Shepherd the crown of glory that fadeth not away! One grand object seems ever to have been kept in view by the apostles, and that was, to exhibit Christ, to exalt him on all occasions, to make him the Alpha and Omega of all their discourses. This is the substance of the apostle's avowal in the language of our text, "We preach not ourselves," &c.

We have in the text, I. What the Apostles did not Preach. And, II. What was the Theme of their Ministry. Notice,

I. *What the Apostles did not Preach.*

"We preach not ourselves." It signifies,

1. That they were not self-appointed.

The apostle Paul frequently takes notice of this in his various epistles to the churches. "Paul, called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ, through the will of God." 1 Cor. i. 1. He repeats the same in the commencement of his second epistle to the same church. When writing to the Galatians, he says, "Paul, an apostle (not of men, neither by man" &c. Gal. i. 1 See also, Eph. i. 1; Col. i. 1; 1 Tim. i. 1; 2 Tim. i. 1. It is God's prerogative through the agency of his church to put men into the work of the ministry

2. They were not self-taught.

They received the truths they delivered from God. They were but the publishers of the will and word of the Lord. Ministers are not to deliver their own sentiments, but the whole unadulterated counsels of God. They are to preach, not their own theories, but Christ's gospel, &c.

3. They were not self-seeking preachers.

They did not manage their calling as a secular business, they sought not human favor or applause, they sought not the riches of the churches, but their spiritual welfare and salvation; they were strangers to mercenary motives, and counted all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus their Lord.

4. They were the church's servants for Jesus' sake.

Not lords over God's heritage, not masters in Christ's family, but servants. It was theirs to wait upon, and to minister to the spiritual necessities of their charge and, as servants, they were examples of humility, of patience, of labor, constancy, and disinterestedness. And they were servants for Jesus' sake; from the constraining influence his love produced on their souls. 2 Cor. v 12–15. Notice,

II. *What was the Theme of their Ministry.*

"Christ Jesus the Lord."

By his authority they preached, his gospel they declared, his glory they sought. And how did they preach Christ Jesus the Lord?

1. In the divinity of his person.

They preached him both as Lord and Christ, as the anointed of God, and, at the same time, Lord of all. They exalted him above all prophets and righteous men; above all angels, principalities, and powers; they gave him divine titles, divine perfections, attributed to him divine works, offered him divine homage, &c. They declared, He was God manifest in the flesh, &c.; the true God; only wise God; God over all, blessed for evermore. (See Sketch on Divinity of Christ.) John i. 1, &c.; Col ii. 3, &c.; 1 Tim iii 16; Philip ii. 6 &c., &c

They preach Christ,

2. In his sacred offices, as Prophet, Priest, and King.

(1) Prophet. Acts iii. 23; Luke xxiv. 19.

(2) Priest. Heb. ii. 17; iv. 14; ix. 11, &c.

(3) King. Acts xvii. 17; 1 Tim. vi. 15; Rev. i. 5, &c.

They preach Christ,

3. In the mystery of his incarnation.

Born of a woman, even a virgin, according to the prophet Isaiah; "A virgin shall conceive," &c. Matt. i. 23. "In the fulness of the times God sent his Son," &c. Gal. iv. 4. "Great is the mystery," &c. 1 Tim. iii. 16.

They preached Christ,

4. In the purity of his nature.

Though made in all respects like unto his brethren, yet without sin. Holy, harmless, and separate from sinners, &c. Heb. i 26.

They preached Christ,

5. In the splendor of his miracles.

Observe Peter's sermon at Jerusalem. "Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you, by miracles, and wonders, and signs." Acts ii. 22. None ever did the miraculous works which Christ did. Consider the number, the variety, the graciousness of them, and also that they were effected by his own power, and in his own name.

They preached Christ,

6. In the perfection of his example.

In humility, patience, zeal, fidelity, constancy, mercy, goodness, &c. He hath left us an example, says the apostle, that we should follow his steps. To Christ they directed the people to look, to consider Jesus; to follow Jesus; to be like-minded with Jesus. Heb. xii. 2; Philip. iii. 17; 1 Thess. i. 6, &c.

They preached Christ,

7. In the depths of his humiliation, and intensity of his sufferings.

"Made himself of no reputation," &c. Philip. ii. 7, 8. "Though he was rich, yet for our sakes," &c. 2 Cor. viii. 9. "For Christ also hath once suffered," &c. Pet. ii. 21; Heb. ii. 18; xiii. 12.

They preached Christ,

8. In the atoning efficacy of his death.

"That he died for our sins, according to the Scriptures." 1 Cor xv. 1. "Redeemed us from the curse of the law being made a curse for us." Gal iii. 13 "Made sin for us who knew no sin." 2 Cor. v. 21. "We have redemption through his blood," &c. Col. i. 14. "Tasted death for every man." Heb. ii. 9, &c.

They preached Christ,

9. In the power of his resurrection.

That he rose from the dead the third day, according to the Scriptures; that he rose for our justification; that it was not possible he should be holden of death, &c Acts ii. 24. 1 Cor. xv. 4.

They preached Christ,

10. In the glory of his ascension.

"That he who had ascended was the same who descended first into the lower parts of the earth, and that he is ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things." Eph. iv. 9. "Him hath God exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour," &c. Acts v. 31. "Exalted above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion," &c. Eph. i. 21.

They preached Christ,

11. In the prevalency of his intercession as the Great High-priest of our profession

He is not only ascended to receive his own reward, but to carry on a most glorious and important work: as the advocate of his church, who ever liveth to make intercession for us. He is mediator of the New Testament, &c. Heb. ix. 15. See Heb. x. 12–23.

They preached Christ,

12. As the final judge of quick and dead.

See 2 Tim. iv. 1. "Father committed all judgment to the Son." John v. 22. "We must all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ." Rom. xiv. 10.

Finally, they preached Christ always, in all places and times, and to all ranks and classes. They preached him as the world's Redeemer, the sinner's only hope, the believer's joy, and the church's Head. And they preached him as the end of the law; as the substance of sacrifices, shadows, and types; as the sum of the Gospel—as the all, and in all.

APPLICATION.

This subject presents, 1. A model worthy of the attention of every minister of Jesus Christ Christ must be the grand theme of preaching; his person and work must be constantly exhibited.

2. The duty of Christian hearers—to re-

ceive the Saviour who is presented to them in the gospel.

3. The effects of evangelical preaching. Savor of life to believers, and a savor of death to those who despise the cross of Christ. Here the sinner is left without excuse, and justly perishes for rejecting that Jesus who died for his sins, and who came expressly that men might have life, and have it more abundantly.

SKETCH XIV

CHRIST A DIVINE TEACHER

"We know that thou art a teacher come from God."—*John* iii. 2.

CHRIST came to sustain the three-fold office of Prophet Priest, and King. Each of these offices he fully and perfectly fulfilled. As a Prophet, he made known the will of God. As a Priest, he offered the holy and spotless sacrifice of himself. As a King, he gave laws to his church, and remains permanently seated on his gracious throne, where he shall sit until he hath made his enemies his footstool. As a Prophet, he was superior to all that had ever preceded him—greater than Moses himself. As a Priest, he was after the order of Melchizedek. As a Sovereign, he has written upon his vesture, and upon his thigh, "King of kings, and Lord of lords." Let us at present contemplate that part of his prophetical office which more immediately relates to him as a Teacher, and thus feel the propriety and force of the ruler's confession, "We know that thou art a teacher come from God."

Consider then, I. Christ as a Teacher. II. As a Teacher sent from God. III. Our Duty in Reference to Him. Consider,

I. *Christ as a Teacher.*

Here two things will demand our notice: 1. The nature of his instructions; and, 2. The manner of his communications.

Observe then,

1. The nature of his instructions.

(1) His instructions were diversified in their nature. He revealed the character of Deity—explained and illustrated the doctrine of Providence—exposed the depravity of the human heart—exhibited the remedy which God has provided—stated and enforced the necessity of repentance, faith, regeneration, and holiness He published a new code of laws extending to the thoughts of men. He plainly stated the certainty of a general resurrection, and opened the glorious gates to immortality and eternal life. Matt. v., vi., vii.; John iii.; John v. 19–31.

(2) His instructions were of great importance. The very opposite of the conceits and glosses of the Jewish Rabbies, and affording an equally striking contrast to the wild theories of the pagan philosophers. He taught man what related to his true dignity, his present, permanent happiness, and his eternal well being. Luke iv. 18; John x. 10.

(3) His instructions were of universal and individual concern. He was the Teacher of all classes. All stood in need of his instructions, and all were equally interested in them. He stood in the capacity of a Teacher to the whole world His doctrines were intended to enlighten every man that cometh into the world. John i. 9.

(4) His instructions were of eternal consequence. The woes he pronounced to the wilfully ignorant and finally impenitent were eternal, and the rewards he offered were not temporal, but eternal. For this end did he come, to show men the way to everlasting life. John x. 28; xvii. 2, 3; 1 John v. 20. Notice,

2. The manner in which he communicated his instructions.

(1) With plainness and simplicity. How beautifully familiar were his discourses! How clearly he illustrated all the subjects he brought before the people! He referred them to the sower—to the fisherman—to the woman with the leaven, and the three measures of meal—to the lost sheep—to the lilies—to the vine—to houses built upon the sand and upon the rock; and the consequence was, the common people—the plain and unlearned, who formed the great majority of his congregations, heard him gladly. His discourses suited their capacities, and thus they received instruction, profit, and delight. Mark xii. 37.

His teaching was distinguished,

(2) For condescension and patience. He stooped to the poor; he sought out the wretched, and those who were overlooked by the teachers of the day. He addressed publicans and sinners, profligates and harlots; and many of these pressed into the

kingdom of God. And how patiently he taught his disciples! How he endured their dulness, and with all perseverance gave them lesson upon lesson; and never did he break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax. Matt. ix. 11–13.

His teaching was distinguished,

(3) For tenderness and affection. How deeply he felt for the poor perishing souls he came to instruct! With what graciousness he made his words known to them! How his bowels yearned over them! And when they remained incorrigible he wept over them, and said, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often," &c. Goodness and mercy were conspicuous in all he said, as well as in all he did. Matt. xxiii. 37. It was distinguished,

(4) For truth and fidelity. Though tender and affectionate, yet he was faithful in all things to the ministry committed to him. He was faithful to the Jews as a people—to the Scribes, Pharisees, and Sadducees—to his own disciples. He was emphatically "the truth." And he loved souls too well to hold any part of it back. Matt. xxii.

His teaching was distinguished,

(5) For unwearied constancy and perseverance. He went about from place to place in search of ignorant wandering souls; and times, places, or circumstances, had no weight with him. He cared not whether it was morning, noon, or evening; whether the sabbath or any other day. He cared not whether his congregations were collected in the synagogue, the market-place, on the way-side, the mountain-top, or the sea-shore. It was his meat and drink to do the will of his Father; and he never wearied nor allowed himself to be diverted from it, until "he said, It is finished, and he gave up the ghost."

This leads us to observe,

II. *That Christ was a Teacher sent from God.*

As a proof of which,

1. We appeal to his harbinger.

What said the Baptist? "Behold the Lamb of God," &c. "He it is who, coming after me, is preferred before me, whose shoe's latchet I am not worthy to unloose." He acted as his herald, and prepared the way for him as one sent from God. John i. 23–27.

2. We appeal to the signs at his baptism.

The opening heavens exhibited it. The Father's voice proclaimed it: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." The Holy Ghost descended on him, and anointed him, as a Teacher sent from God. Matt. iii. 16.

3. We appeal to his transfiguration.

There Moses and Elijah surrendered all into his hands—the Father's attestation is renewed; and a solemn injunction is heard: "Hear ye him." Luke ix. 28.

4. We appeal to his heavenly doctrines

Did not his discourses attest, that both the speaker and the doctrines were from above? Who could have revealed such truths, and made such discoveries, if he had not been from God?

5. We appeal to his glorious miracles.

He did what no other teacher ever had done. He healed all manner of sicknesses expelled devils, and raised the dead; and that by his own power, and in his own name: hence reasoned Nicodemus, "No man could do these miracles that thou dost, except God be with him."

6. We appeal to his resurrection.

For surely God would not have raised an impostor from the dead; but Christ he did raise; and thus he was proved to be the true Messiah, the Son of God, with power. Rom. i. 4.

7. We appeal to the influence of his teaching.

Has it not made myriads wise to salvation? Did it not chasten the impure, reform the profligate, dignify the debased, make happy the wretched, and inspire the lost sons of men with a joyful hope of immortality? Yes; we do know that he was a Teacher sent from God.

Let us inquire, then,

III. *What is our Duty in reference to Him.*

To receive his heavenly instructions, that the design of his teaching may be fully answered in us. In order to this, we must receive his teaching,

1. With deep humility.

Conscious of our ignorance and unworthiness

2. With constant attention.

That we may learn the lessons he communicates.

3. With affectionate application.

Feeling that our best interests are identified with his teachings.

4. With unabated constancy.

As we shall ever stand in need of his instructions.

5. With gratefu acknowledgments.

For his goodness and mercy towards us, and for the benefits he has conferred upon us.

6. With a practical exemplification of his doctrines in our dispositions, tempers, and lives.

"Doers of the word.' See Parable of the Sower.

APPLICATION.

1. Congratulate his scholars on their privileges, enjoyments, and prospects.

2. Invite the ignorant to hear him.

3. Warn the impenitent, that all who hear not him shall surely die.

SKETCH XV.

THE HAPPY PEOPLE.

"Happy is that people whose God is the Lord."—*Ps* cxliv. 15.

HAPPINESS is universally desired. Men of all ranks and stations are earnestly seeking it. The general inquiry is: Who will show us any good? To this, one replies: Seek it in bags of gold, in the riches of the world; money answereth all things. Another replies: Seek it in the path of human greatness and earthly glory. A third says: You will find it in the avenues of pleasure, or the soft luxurious walks of worldly enjoyment. And what is the result? The poor deluded soul tries each of these remedies; and instead of finding his anguish removed, the feverish excitement is increased, and he is more dissatisfied and wretched than ever! Religion, the offspring of Deity, the angel of mercy, and the friend of man, opens the true and only door to real intellectual bliss, and sweetly whispers the sentiment of the text; "Happy is that people whose God is the Lord."

The subject calls us to notice, I. The People of God. And II. The happiness they possess.

Let us then consider,

I. *The People of God.*

We shall easily distinguish them from others,

1. By their knowledge.

The world is in darkness and know not God, nor Jesus whom he hath sent God's people were once in darkness, but are now light in the Lord. They know themselves—their depravity, misery, helplessness. They know God, as their Father; Jesus, as their Saviour; the Spirit, as their Comforter and Guide. Their knowledge is scriptural, experimental, practical. 1 John v. 20.

They are distinguished,

2. By their faith.

While the world is in unbelief, they have received Jesus by faith; they heartily credit the record given of him; they rest on his sacrificial work; they acknowledge him as their Prophet, Priest, and King; and they entirely depend upon him for acceptance, sanctification, and eternal life Gal. iii. 26.

The people of God are distinguished,

3. For their spirituality.

While the world is in a carnal state, they are no longer under the influence of the carnal mind, which is enmity against God, and which worketh death; but they are in the Spirit, and the Spirit of God dwelleth in them; they walk after the Spirit, and are spiritually-minded, which is life and peace. Rom. viii. 1–14.

They are distinguished,

4. For their profession of Christ before men.

While the world denies him, and accounts the preaching of his cross foolishness; they have heard and obeyed the invitation of Jesus; have left all, taken up their cross, and followed him. They confess him before men; are his disciples, and count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus their Lord. They are elevated lights—cities set on hills—the salt of the earth. Matt. x 32–42.

They are distinguished,

5. For their uniform obedience.

While the world lieth in wickedness they evidence the reality of their Christian character, by keeping Christ's commandments. They desire and endeavor to do whatsoever he commands. They do know that they know him, because they keep his commandments. 1 John ii. 3; John vii. 17.

They are distinguished from the world,

6. By their love to God and his people.

He that is of love is of God; and he

hat dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, for God is love. They love God; and evidence it by the bent of their desires, by their conversation, and their efforts to glorify him before men. They love his people; and evidence it by preferring them before others, by sympathy, by acts of courtesy and kindness. They do good to all men; but especially to those that are of the household of faith. "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye love one another;" 1 John iv. 7, &c. Having described the people of God, let us notice,

II. *The Happiness they possess.*

"Happy is that people whose God is the Lord."

They are happy,

1. In the enjoyment of the divine favor.

In his favor is life. His loving-kindness is better than life. God is their reconciled Friend, their affectionate Father. He loves them with an unbounded and inconceivable love. They are his delight, his jewels; and he will spare them, as a Father spareth his own son who serveth him. Psal. cvi. 4; xxx. 5. They are happy,

2. In the possession of divine peace.

They have peace with God through Christ Jesus their Lord. The peace of God, that passeth all understanding, keeps their hearts and minds, through Jesus Christ. Besides they have peace of conscience, possess the Spirit of peace, and are at peace with all mankind. They possess Christ's invaluable legacy of peace; John xiv. 27; Rom. xiv. 7. They are happy,

3. In being entitled to all the privileges of adoption.

They have the family name, family costume, access to the family table; and they have all the family dignities, immunities, and privileges; Gal. iv. 4. They are happy,

4. In being interested in all the precious promises.

These all belong to them. Temporal promises, of food, raiment, preservation, guidance, &c. Promises which relate to the dwellings and families of the righteous; to their posterity; to the work of their hands; to their basket and store. Promises of all the arrangements of providence, promoting their well-being. Promises of angelic ministration, of supplies of grace, and of all the good they can possibly need 2 Pet. i. 4. They are happy,

5. In the enjoyment of the Spirit of God.

The Spirit of God dwelleth in them, as a Spirit of adoption—as their comforter and guide into all truth—as a Spirit of sanctification—as the earnest of the glory that shall be revealed. Rom. viii. 9–18 They are happy,

6. In the prospect of eternal glory.

To this glory they are called; for this glory they have a title and a growing meetness; and they know in whom they have believed, and that he will keep what they have committed to him against that day. They know, that to live is Christ, but to die eternal gain. They are looking with joy and glowing hope for the coming of the great God, even Jesus Christ, who shall come to be magnified in his saints, and admired by all them that believe; 1 John v. 13; Jude 21. The happiness of the people of God extends,

(1) To all places. In secret, in public, at home, and abroad, they are always in God's presence, and his watchful eye is ever over them.

(2) It extends to all times. Times of prosperity or adversity—health or sickness—life or death—time and eternity.

(3) It extends to all their need. In every possible variety of condition and circumstance. He watches, blesses, and supplies all their need; so that they may be happy in him all the day. And he also gives them songs in the night.

(4) It is happiness which is permanent The world can neither give it, nor take it away; for God is their sun, shield, refuge, strength of their heart, exceeding great reward, and portion forever.

APPLICATION.

This subject furnishes grounds for,

1. Important inquiry. Are we God' people? Have we fled for refuge to the hope set before us? Have we believed on the Son of God? Have we the witness in ourselves? Do we bear his holy image, delight in his law, and love his people?

2. Let the people of God rejoice in the loving-kindness of the Lord. They may indeed, exult in God, rejoice evermore and in every thing give thanks. The child of God can sing—

" I would not change my blest estate
For all the world calls rich or great;
And while my faith can keep her hold,
I envy not the sinner's gold."

3. Invite weary heavy-laden sinners to come o Jesus, and he will give them rest.

SKETCH XVI.

THE SOLEMN CAUTION

" To-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts."—*Heb.* iii. 7

The history of the Jews is replete with instruction. We cannot review it without learning three solemn lessons. The deep depravity of the human heart; for how they murmured and sinned against God, when he was making both heaven and earth subservient to their well-being! We perceive, also, how great is the divine compassion! how slow God is to anger! how extensive in mercy! how patient and long-suffering towards his erring people! We learn from their history, that impenitent and incorrigible sinners will not finally be allowed to escape; that, if his grace be despised, and his mercy perseveringly rejected, he will in nowise spare the guilty. How many thousands of ancient Israel verified this momentous truth! and the apostle, referring to the punishment inflicted upon them, draws from it the solemn caution of the text: " To-day, if ye will hear his voice," &c. Let us consider,

I. *The Voice referred to.*

" His voice."

By reading the fifth and sixth verses, we shall perceive that the voice referred to is the voice of Christ. And as such,

1. It is the voice of mercy.

Grace was poured into his lips. He came not to condemn, but to save the world. He appeared not on the black and terrible mount to curse; but on the mount of light and brightness, to bless the people. " The Spirit of the Lord is upon me," &c.; Luke iv. 18. He had compassion on the people, and opened his heart and his arms to receive them. " All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven," &c. " I am come that ye might have life, and have it more abundantly."

2. It was the voice of divine authority.

He was the Sent and Anointed of God, and was invested with all power and authority. To despise the words of Moses was to stand exposed to the divine displeasure; of how much sorer punishmen are they then worthy, who despise the voice of the only-begotten Son of God. His words will be the savor of life, or the savor of death, to every child of man He is not only a Saviour, but he is King of kings, and Lord of lords.

3. It is the only voice directly connected with the sinner's salvation.

None can give rest to the weary but Christ. None can invite to the supper but Christ. None can speak away the guilt of the sinner but Christ. None can give peace to the distracted soul but Christ. None can pronounce the blessed reward, and give eternal life, but Christ. No name given among men, by which we can be saved, but Christ's.

4. This voice addresses us through various mediums of communication.

It addresses us through the medium of the written word, for the Scriptures testify of Christ. The word is emphatically the word of Christ. It addresses us in the proclamation of the Gospel; his servants preach Christ. It addresses us by the influences of the Spirit; for the work of the Spirit is to take of the things of Christ, and reveal them unto us. It speaks to us in the events of providence; for all these are under the immediate control of Christ. For by him are all things, and for him are all things, &c.

Let us notice, then,

II. *The Attention demanded.*

That is, we are to hear his voice. And it is implied,

1. That we hear so as to understand it.

That we apprehend the sense and meaning of Christ's addresses. The eunuch did not know whether the prophet testified of himself or of some other man; Acts viii. 34. We cannot possibly be benefited by what we do not understand.

2. We must hear so as to believe it.

To receive it as truth—as the truth of God—as the truth of God to us—as truth in which we are deeply and eternally interested—as the truth of salvation; and as such, it must have our cordial approbation and our hearty credence our implicit trust and reliance. " He that believeth shall be saved," &c.

3 We must hear so as to obey it

This will be the evidence of our faith. His words must abide in us; be seen in our spirit, temper, and conversation. We must forsake the evils of the world, come out o. it, take up the cross, deny ourselves, and follow Christ.

Observe,

III. *The Specified Period for Hearing Christ's Voice.*

"To-day, if ye will hear his voice."

The gospel dispensation is represented as a day; and during the whole of this Christ's voice may be heard. But in addressing men individually, it behooves us to refer them to the limited period of human existence, as this is their only day of opportunity and grace. And hence, the season for hearing Christ's voice is,

1. Short.

Only a day! How soon it will terminate! How much to be performed within its narrow limits! A title and meetness for life eternal to be attained! Our generation work fulfilled! The period is,

2. Uncertain as well as short.

Days are dissimilar in length. Antediluvians had a long day. Patriarchs much longer than us. Ours very contracted; and yet liable to be more so, by disease and accidents. Of many it may be said: "Their sun goeth down while it is yet day." This day is,

3. Succeeded by the darkness and stillness of the grave.

No device nor work there—no gospel there—no voice of mercy—no exhortation—no promise given to the dead. Therefore, how necessary that, while it is day, we hear the voice of the Son of God, and live! Notice,

IV. *The important Caution annexed.*

"To-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts."

We must regard the caution, and harden not our hearts,

1. By inattention to the concerns of our souls

The natural tendency of the heart is hardness; if we neglect it, keep it from the softening influences of the word, Spirit, and blood of Christ, it will become callous, heedless, and hardened. Israel did not know, and would not consider. Jehovah says by Moses: "O that they were wise," &c.

We must not harden our hearts,

2. By pursuing the works of darkness.

These all harden the heart. It is the necessary consequence of sin to steel the mind, to blunt the feelings, and to pervert the faculties of the soul.

We must not harden our hearts,

3. By yielding to the influences of unbelief.

Unbelief darkens the mind and petrifies the heart. It resists all evidence, and stays the wonder-working arm of the Son of God. "For he could not do many mighty works there, because of their unbelief."

We must not harden our hearts,

4. By a sordid attachment to the present world.

Love of the world necessarily leads to hardness of heart in reference to the things of God and eternity. It keeps the soul from Christ and salvation. It concentrates all the powers of the mind in pursuit of the good things of this perishing world, and loses sight of heaven and the crown of glory which God has prepared for all who love him.

APPLICATION.

(1) You are all responsible, for the voice of Christ has repeatedly sounded in your ears.

(2) You have all your day—a period given for the improvement of your privileges and mercies.

(3) How necessary, then, to hear his voice! How important that you harden not your hearts!

(4) Let our influence be laid out in bringing the ignorant and perishing of our race to hear the joyful sound, that they may not perish for lack of knowledge.

(5) Let us be watching, and preparing for the second advent of the Saviour, when they that are in their graves shall hear his voice and live

SKETCH XVII.

THE LOVE OF CHRIST TO HIS PEOPLE.

"As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love."—*John* xv 9

THE Saviour is discoursing in this chapter on the union subsisting between himself and his believing people. He likens himself to the vine, his people to the

branches, and shows how entirely they depend upon him for fruitfulness and safety; ver. 5, 6. He then shows how the Father would be glorified in their bearing much fruit; and states that they might ask in prayer as largely and abundantly as they pleased; yet it should certainly be done unto them, ver. 7, 8. Then he declares unto them the affectionate sentiment of the text: "As the Father hath loved me," &c.

The subject contains, I. A Gracious Declaration. II. An Interesting Similitude. And, III. An Affectionate Exhortation. Observe,

I. *The Gracious Declaration.*

"I have loved you."

Christ's love is the very essence of the gospel; as without this no good tidings of great joy would ever have been communicated to perishing man. The love of Christ is evident,

1. From the professions of his love.

The name he assumed was a profession of his love. He was called Jesus, because he came to save his people from their sins. The professions of love to man he revealed by the prophets; they all testified of Christ, and of his love to the sons of men. When he appeared in our nature he manifested the most ardent attachment to our race: he exhorted them—wooed them—wept over them—went about healing their sicknesses, removing their misery, and forgiving their sins. His apostles, too, testify of Christ's professed love to mankind. "Herein is love," &c. "He loved us," &c. "Unto him who hath loved us," &c. His discourses, his miracles, his prayers, all proved the truth and sincerity of his love towards us. Observe,

2. The achievements of his love.

His love was effective, and produced the most glorious consequences to mankind. His love magnified the law, and removed the curse—his love made him our surety, and he bore the smart, endured the cross, despised the shame, and made his soul an offering for sin. Yes; he loved us, and gave himself for us. His love induced him to become our deliverer; to encounter the foes of our race; and to overcome, for our salvation, sin, death, and the grave. Yes; he spoiled our adversaries, he led captivity captive, overcame principalities and powers, and made a show of them openly. Notice,

3. The provisions of his love.

His love has not only achieved much but provided for us the unsearchable riches of grace here, and of glory in the world to come. The blessings are too numerous to be named. We refer, merely as a specimen, to pardon, peace, righteousness, joy, immortality, resurrection of the body, and eternal life. "Eye hath not seen," &c. 1 Cor. ii. 9.

What has been advanced respecting Christ's love, may scripturally apply to all mankind. See John iii. 14–18; also 1 John ii. 2. But he displays peculiar and special love to those who have believed on his name. These he loves with complacency and delight; and it is to these that our attention is expressly called in the second part of the subject Notice, then, in the text,

II. *An Interesting Similitude.*

"As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you," &c.

This similitude will, however, have to be guarded, as it cannot apply in every particular. The Father never loved Christ with a love of compassion, pity, or long-suffering, as the Saviour never stood in need of the exercise of these towards him. He never sinned; therefore, never required mercy, &c. This agreement between God's love to his Son, and the love of Christ to his people, may include,

1. The antiquity of his love.

Christ said to the Father, "Thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world," John xvii. 24. So Christ loved the church, and his delights were with his people from everlasting, before the earth was, &c. Prov. viii. 23–31; Jer. xxxi. 3. It may refer,

2. To the ground of his love.

Ground of the Father's love to Christ was the express image he bore of himself. He beheld reflected from his countenance the bright rays of his own glory. So Christ loves his people because of their resemblance to himself. This likeness consists in being of one mind with Jesus, obeying his holy commandments, and following his steps. And for this he became incarnate that he might redeem to himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works, and that they might be partakers of the divine nature. John xiv. 21–23. It may include

3. The greatness of his love.

The Father loved the Son with an in

expressible love of complacency and delight. Isa. xlii. 1, Matt. iii. 17, and xvii. 5. In like manner Christ hath loved his people; and his love, in its length, and breadth, and depth, and height, passeth knowledge. He loved them so as to lay down his life, and shed his precious blood for them. Rev. i. 5. This similitude may apply,

4. To the constancy of his love.

The Father loved the Son always—he was ever his delight—it never wavered nor abated for a single moment. "So Christ having loved his own, which are in the world, he loved them to the end." John xiii. 1. Yes; he loves them in all seasons and circumstances, in health, sickness, death, and eternity. It may refer,

5. To the evidences of his love.

And how did the Father evidence his love to his Son? He always heard him—was ever with him. John xvi. 32; John xi. 42. He gave all things into his hands. John iii. 35. So Jesus ever hears his people. He is with them always, and has made them heirs of all things. "All are yours," &c.; 1 Cor. iii. 22. "Heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ." Rom. viii. 17. It may include,

6. The glorious rewards of his love.

The Father has given him a name above every name—raised him to great power and dominion; and has glorified him with the glory which he had with him before the world was. Yet, similar glory does Christ give to his people. "The glory which thou gavest me shall be given them." John xvii. 22. Rev. iii. 21. Rom. viii. 17. Notice in the text,

III. *An Affectionate Exhortation.*

"Continue ye in my love."

1. Continue to prize and value it.

And what so worthy of our highest joys and delight?

2. Continue to cultivate it.

It is a holy, tender affection, and must be nurtured with the greatest care.

3. Continue to abound more and more in it.

Make advances—grow in grace, &c. Fellowship closer.

4. Continue to evidence it,

By walking as he walked, by keeping his commandments, loving one another, and promoting his cause.

5. Continue to profess and recommend it.

Christ's witnesses. Not ashamed, &c. Bear his badge, &c.

"Point sinners to his dying blood,
And cry, Behold the way to God."

The love of Christ constraineth us, &c.

APPLICATION.

(1) Sinner, do not despise Christ's love to thee.

(2) Mourning soul, dry up thy tears, and be happy in the provisions this love hath made.

(3) Disciple of Christ, rejoice in this love with joy unspeakable and full of glory.

SKELETON XIX.

CHRISTIAN PREROGATIVES

"All are yours."—1 *Cor.* iii. 22.

The Christian's life and character are truly paradoxical. He is dead while he lives; he is full when he is empty; and when weak, then only is he strong. He is a stranger and pilgrim, yet heir of all things; he is poor and lowly, yet his prerogatives include all things, for the apostle says, "All are yours." Then let us notice, I. The Characters, and, II. The High Prerogatives they possess.

I. *The Characters.*

For the passage does not apply to all men. It will seem from the preceding part of the epistle, that they were,

1. Believers.

They are Christ's disciples. "Ye are Christ's." This is what distinguishes between the children of God, and the children of the wicked one. To those who received him he gave power to become his sons, even to as many as believed on his name. John i. 12. They have received Jesus as their only hope and Saviour, and rely upon him for acceptance and eternal life.

2. They were saints. Chap. i. 2.

That is, holy ones. Not absolutely so, but by regeneration. Called to it. Holy in disposition and desires, in walk and conversation. Christ made to them sanctification. Ch. i. 30. Seeking after it, &c. They were visible saints. Separated from the world. Formed into church order Attending the ordinances of the gospel &c., &c.

3. They were the temples of God. Ch. iii. 16.

Consecrated to his service—hallowed by his presence—residence of his Holy Spirit. If any man hath not the Spirit, he is none of his. Rom. viii. 9. The Spirit testifies to their adoption. Comforts, guides, and strengthens them.

4. They were distinguished for many imperfections.

Divisions among them—strifes, &c. One of Paul, another of Apollos, &c. Best of Christians imperfect: this must not, however, produce carelessness or indifference. Should make us humble, watchful, diligent, &c. May encourage the sincere, yet doubtful Christian. Notice,

II. *Their High and Distinguished Prerogatives.*

"All are yours."

1. All the good things of this world, as far as they will do them good. See Psalm xxxvii. 1, &c.

They that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing. Bread shall be given, water be sure. Riches, if necessary, as in Solomon's case. Dignity and power, as in the case of Joseph, Nehemiah, and Daniel.

2. The arrangements of Providence are heirs.

All things work together for their good. The Omnipotent Ruler is their covenanted Saviour, and never-failing Friend. Laws of nature suspended for them if necessary, as in the case of the Israelites—three Hebrew children, &c.

3 Redeeming mercy and grace are theirs.

They have had it exhibited before them—have felt and tasted that the Lord is gracious. Know that Christ has power to forgive sins, &c.

4 The precious promises are theirs.

In all their fulness, variety, richness, and durability. Both those that relate to earth and heaven, to body and soul, to time and eternity.

5. The ministers of the Gospel are theirs

Their servants for Christ's sake. Their watchmen, shepherds, teachers, &c. Theirs to warn them, reprove them, exhort them comfort them, build them up, &c.

6. Christian ordinances are theirs.

Baptism; by which they may put on Christ before men. The Lord's Supper; to testify to Christ's love, and show forth his death till he come. The preaching of the Word; that they may be fed with spiritual milk, and grow thereby. Prayer; that they may come to the throne of grace for all needful good. And praise; that they may magnify Him who hath called them from darkness into his marvellous light.

7. Afflictions are theirs.

To wean them from the world, refine their graces, and make them conformable to their suffering Head.

8. Life is theirs.

Their season of golden opportunities—of privileges, &c. Of labor and conflicts. Their race-course—time of stewardship, &c.

9. Death is theirs.

To conclude their trial, labors and warfare; and to introduce them to glory.

10. Heaven is theirs.

Joy of heaven—society of heaven—company of heaven—employments of heaven, &c. Crown—palms—robes, &c.

11. Eternity is theirs.

The date of their happiness—the only boundary of their salvation.

12. God is theirs.

Father, Son, and Spirit. They shall see him, enjoy him, and be with him forever. "Heirs of God." Rom. viii. 17.

APPLICATION.

1. How rich, happy, and safe the people of God! 2. What solemn responsibilities do these blessings involve! All belong to God—body, soul, and spirit. 3. Invite sinners to come and enjoy the Christian's portion and reward. 4. How foolish the backslider! What infatuation to abandon "all things!" Return to the Lord thy God, &c.

SKELETON XX

SCRIPTURE CHARACTERS

NO. II. NOAH

"Noah was a just man and perfect in his generations, and Noah walked with God."—*Gen.* vi. 9.

Noah was the son of Lamech, and was born about the year of the world 1056, or about 126 years after the death of Adam. His name signifies rest, or consolation see ver. 29. His history is full of striking incidents, and he has a prominent place

among the believing worthies mentioned by the apostle in his letter to the Hebrews; see Heb. xi. 7, &c. We must limit our observations in this short sketch, and select what is most likely to interest and profit us.

Let us consider Noah in his private character—in his public labors—and in his gracious deliverance. Notice,

I. *His Private Character.*

1. He found grace in the sight of the Lord. Ver. 8.

That is, he obtained the favor of God. This he did, by believing God's warnings to the old world. Heb. xi. 7. This produced a holy, reverential fear of God. No other way to obtain divine favor, but by believing that he is, and that he is the rewarder of those who diligently seek him.

2. He was a just man.

Equitable in his dealings—honest—upright—straightforward, &c. Justice essential to the Christian character. "What doth the Lord require of thee," &c.

3. He was perfect in his generation.

Perfection here, in the very best of men, can only mean to be perfect in sincerity, in desire, in aim, in parts, as the child has all the parts of the full-grown man. Perfect in his generation, compared with those around him—compared with the best of them, &c.

4. Noah walked with God.

He was in agreement with God—walked as God dictated—walked in fellowship with God—kept up close communion with him.

5 Noah's character was thus excellent at a time of universal corruption.

World against him—he had to stand alone—to resist the torrent—to be God's witness when wicked men had excluded his authority and religion from the world. Chap. vi. 1. Notice,

II. *His Public Labors.*

He was a preacher of righteousness, &c. 1 Peter ii. 5. As such, he would have,

1. To place their unrighteousness before them.

Charge them with their sins. Knowledge of disease indispensable to restoration.

2. He had to enforce attention to righteousness.

This is their only way of safety. Cease to do evil, &c. Let the wicked forsake his way, &c. Turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways, &c.

3. As a preacher he was faithful.

Both as to matter, manner perseverance, &c. He condemned the old world, left them without excuse, &c.

4. He preached practically.

By his own example, and more especially by building the ark. They had it rising before their eyes. Every nail was a text to them, and every plank a sermon. The ark was typical of Jesus, provided for the salvation of a perishing world. To him Gospel ministers direct inquiring sinners, as the only refuge from the wrath to come.

Notwithstanding,

5. He was an unsuccessful preacher.

They despised his discourses—most probably laughed at his ark—remained infatuated—and perished. God, however, was clear; the preacher was clear; their blood was upon their own heads. God does not coerce men; he invites, presents motive, affords means, supplies strength and then, if they perish, it is because they will not come unto him and have life. Mark,

III. *His Gracious Deliverance.*

According to intimation, the flood came—world overflowed—people perished.—Noah, with his wife, his three sons, and their wives, were the only saved. His deliverance,

1. Was the gracious reward of his faith and obedience.

He had honored God—trusted in God—believed God—obeyed God. Now God distinguishes and saves him, and, for his sake, his family. Noah's deliverance,

2. Was for the encouragement of believing sinners to the end of the world.

Yes! whosoever believeth shall be saved, &c.

APPLICATION.

1. Noah lived after the flood 350 years displayed great frailty, &c. Let us watch and pray, &c. Christ says unto all, Watch. Here, 2. Ministers may learn their duty. 3. Sinners, their only way of sure and certain safety. 4. And the incorrigible, their inevitable doom

SKELETON XXI.

THE HEART DEMANDED.

"My son, give me thine heart."—*Prov.* xxiii. 26.

The heart is a figurative term, often used by the sacred penmen to denote one particular faculty of the soul. Hence it is applied in some instances to the understanding, as in Hosea vii. 11, Matt. xiii. 15. Sometimes it signifies the memory, Psalm cxix. 11. It is used also for the will and the affections, Deut. vi. 5. In the text it signifies the whole mind, both soul and spirit. For these the Lord claims; nor will he be satisfied with an inferior sacrifice. He says to every child of man, "My son," &c. Notice, 1. What is demanded—"The heart." 2. The person by whom, and the purposes for which, it is demanded. And, 3. The importance of complying with the demand made.

Observe then,

I. *What is demanded.*

It is "the heart."

Here notice four things concerning the heart,

1. It is naturally depraved.

In a fallen, debased, and unholy state—alienated from God—opposed to God—not subject to the will of God.

2. It is practically wicked.

Dark, corrupt, seat of evil, fountain of impurity. From it proceeds all the evils of lip and life. Matt. xv. 19. Gal. v. 19.

3. It is necessarily unhappy.

Naked, starving, wretched, and blind. Without peace—without joy, and without hope. No peace, saith my God, &c. Wicked like the troubled sea, &c. Notwithstanding,

4. It is endued with immortality.

It shall exist forever. Now in a state of solemn responsibility, this is the time of trial and probation. Season of improvement and preparation for eternity. And this is the only opportunity that shall be afforded.

Observe,

II. *The Person by whom, and the Purposes for which it is demanded.*

1. The claimant is God.

(1) Thy Father. He calls thee his son. Who made it—who gave it all its capacities.

(2) Thy Ruler—to whom thou art justly subject.

(3) Thy Saviour—who, by an expensive sacrifice, has redeemed it; and thus has provided ample means for its restoration to holiness and eternal life.

He does not need it, for he is infinitely happy in himself, and independent of all his creatures. But he desires it, because he has compassionated its wretchedness, and because he delighteth in mercy.

(4) Thy Judge—who shall decide thy destiny. Consider,

2. The purposes for which he demands it.

He desires it,

(1) That He may enlighten it. Eph. v. 14.

(2) That He may convince it. John xvi. 8.

(3) That He may pardon it. Isaiah lv. 7.

(4) That He may sanctify it. Heb. xiii. 12, 1 Thess. v. 23.

(5) That He may keep it. Isaiah xxvi 23, Philip. iv. 7.

(6) That He may dignify it, and make it happy. Psalm xxxvii. 4 and 34.

(7) That He may eternally save it. 1 Pet. i. 5, Heb. v. 9, and ix. 28.

III. *The importance of Complying with the Demand made.*

Compliance with this demand may be enforced,

1. On the ground of justice.

It is his by right. He stands connected to us as our Creator, Preserver, Saviour, Judge.

2. On the ground of reason.

Not only was the heart formed by him, but for him. He is its only good. All besides a chaotic void.

3. It is grounded on the claims of gratitude.

Who has such claims upon us? We are not our own, &c. Consider his loving-kindnesses and tender mercies towards us.

4. It is grounded on self-interest.

To whom, or to what, shall we give it? To Satan, that he may destroy it, &c.? To the world, that it may pollute it? To sin, that it may ruin it? God only has the words of eternal life. He only can make us everlastingly happy. And in what way shall we comply with this demand? We should give our hearts to him,

(1) Humbly. He will dwell with the humble and contrite, &c

(2) Believingly. Receiving his word as truth and his Son as our only Saviour, &c.

(3) Unreservedly. Give him all our hearts—every faculty and power of the soul—understanding—will—judgment—memory—affections—conscience, &c.

(4) Cherfully. With a willing spirit.

(5) Irrevocably. Give it him forever. Choose him as our present and perpetual portion. This God is our God forever and ever, &c. And we must,

(6) Give it immediately. The future is God's and may not be ours, &c. To-day, &c

APPLICATION.

(1) Congratulate the child of God. How happy, &c. (2) Direct the inquiring soul to the throne of grace, &c. (3) Comfort the mourner. Blessed are they that mourn, &c. (4) Warn the impenitent. He that refuseth God's voice of merciful invitation, must bear the sentence of eternal wo.—Prov. i. 24, &c.

SKELETON XXII

RELIGIOUS INCONSTANCY.

"O Ephraim, what shall I do unto thee? O Judah, what shall I do unto thee? For your goodness is as a morning cloud, and as the early dew it passeth away."—*Hosea* vi. 4.

It is not only necessary to commence a religious course, but to continue in well-doing to the end. Israel and Judah had evolted from God: they had done this repeatedly. After presenting a promising aspect of piety, like a deceitful bow they had turned aside. God had thus been disappointed of those genuine fruits of righteousness, which he had justly expected. The case is applicable to many in our own times. Many run well for a season, and are then hindered. Put their hand to the gospel plough, but, by looking back, unfit themselves for the kingdom.

Let us consider,

I. *The Characters to whom the Text applies.*

The metaphors employed are very striking. The morning cloud, which overhangs the mountain top, but flees before the rising sun. The early dew that moistens the parched earth, and is seen beautifying the flowers and spires of grass, but which is so speedily exhaled, and leaves not a trace behind. The idea presented to us is the evanescence of their piety. It may for a time appear beautiful and real, but it abides not, it passeth away.

The subject applies,

1. To the forgetful hearers of the word

They attend the house of God—they appear interested and affected—they inspire the friends of religion with hope But alas, the word has no root. Matt. xiii. 20. Like a man that looketh at himself in a glass, &c. James i. 24. "Like the morning cloud," &c. It applies,

2. To hasty and inconsiderate professors.

They assume the name and profession of religion, without due care and proper consideration. They enter upon the war fare, and commence building the tower, without counting the cost. New difficulties arise, trouble assails them, and then "their goodness is as the morning cloud," &c. It applies,

3. To backsliders in general—

Who cease the good fight—who turn aside from the Lord—desert his cause—return to the beggarly elements of the world, and walk no longer with his believing people. This is produced sometimes,

(1) Through the influence of the world. Its attractions, possessions, alluring pleasures, society, &c.; Demas. Sometimes,

(2) By yielding to the power of sudden temptation. Peter. Also see Gal. vi. 1.

(3) By unwatchfulness. Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation, &c.

(4) By indolence and inattention to the duties of religion. Hence we are to give all diligence, &c. 2 Pet. i. 10; iii. 4. Their goodness is as the morning cloud, &c.

II. *The Consequences of Religious Inconstancy.*

1. God is deprived of the fruit he reasonably expected.

See Isaiah v. 4–7. Parable of talents &c.

2. The church is filled with mourning for her apostate children.

True friends of Zion weep over those who desert her courts, and forsake her banners.

3 The world is hardened in its iniquity

Unbelievers are established in unbelief—scoffers rejoice—enemies of God triumph—and Christ is wounded in the house of his friends

4. It is peculiarly dreadful to those who are the subjects of this inconstancy.

Mind darkened—heart becomes hard—feelings callous. They become as withered branches, which, if not revived, will be fit only for being cast into the fire and burnt. God is offended—Spirit grieved—prospect darkened—title to glory effaced—meetness for heaven destroyed; and they are subject to that solemn declaration, "If any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him." Heb. x. 38.

Let us notice then,

III. *The Preventives of Religious Inconstancy.*

If we would not that our goodness be as the morning cloud and as the early dew, let us,

1. Cultivate a spirit of holy vigilance.

Let us be jealous of ourselves—watchful over our passions—guard against our enemies, &c. 1 Pet. v. 1.

2. Cultivate a spirit of entire dependence upon God.

He can keep us, and make us fruitful. Let us abide in him—lean upon him, and not trust to our own understanding. We are only kept by "the power of God," &c. 1 Pet. i. 5.

3. Be active and regular in the use of the appointed means.

Public, domestic, secret; hearing, reading, meditation, and prayer.

4. Live in close communion with God, and always set him before us.

"In the fear of God all the day long." "Following hard after him." Anticipating a close and indissoluble union with him in heaven. Walk by faith, &c. Looking at those things which are eternal.

APPLICATION.

(1) Let the professor be warned. He that thinketh he standeth, &c. (2) The sincere active Christian be encouraged. (3) Backsliders invited to return to the Lord, who is waiting to receive them, and who has encouraged them by declaring, "He will heal all their backslidings, and love them freely." Hosea xix. 12. (4) To the resolutely careless apostate, proclaim the terrible threatenings of the word of God

SKETCH XVIII.

THE PLANT OF RENOWN

"I will raise up for them a plant of renown."—*Ezek.* xxxiv. 29.

To Christ gave all the prophets witness They did this in various forms: by express reference to his person and glory; and by figurative allusions to his character and works. The language of metaphor was often employed, as being the most striking and interesting medium of communication. Hence Isaiah refers to Messiah as a Rock a Foundation, Precious Stone, &c.; Zechariah alludes to him as a Fountain opened and Malachi, as the Sun of Righteousness which should arise with healing in his wings. The prophet Ezekiel speaks of him in the text as a plant that should be raised up, even a plant of renown.

Let us consider, I. The Plant. II. The Renown. III. The Raising up.—"I will raise up for them," &c.

I. *The Plant.*

By the plant, Christ is evidently intended. The same figure is employed by Isaiah, xi. 1; also by Jeremiah, xxiii. 5 Two ideas seem conveyed to us by this metaphor:

1. His lowly appearance.

Not represented as a lofty cedar; but as a lowly, tender plant. Isaiah, when describing Christ in like manner, says, "He shall grow up as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground;" liii. 2; and how literally did it take place! Behold his parentage, his birth-place, his external appearance, his occupation, &c.: servant of servants; no pomp, no splendid retinue, companion of fishermen, &c. The description of Christ as a plant may denote,

2. His hidden character.

The chief part of a plant is concealed, hidden from the eye of observation, under ground, &c. In Christ's body of humiliation dwelt the Deity. God was manifest in the flesh. The divine Word tabernacled among us, says John, and we beheld his glory; though he assumed a servant's name and appearance, yet he thought it not robbery to be equal with God. John i. 14; Phil. ii. 6. Observe,

II. *The Renown this Plant should obtain.*

"I will raise up for them a plant of re

nown." The term renown signifies fame, celebrity, distinction, &c. Keeping in view the metaphor of the prophet, we may observe, that this plant is justly renowned,

1. For its abundant fruitfulness.

Some beautiful plants yield no fruit; and others, fruit only of an inferior description. This plant yields fruit of a most precious kind, and in rich abundance. All his offices are full of precious fruit to man—all his acts—all the events of his life—birth, baptism, temptation, sufferings, death, resurrection, ascension, &c. He is the tree of life, spoken of by John in the Revelation, which bears twelve manner of fruits, &c. Christ is full of grace and truth. Rev. xxii. 2. It is renowned,

2. For its unrivalled virtues.

Many plants are medicinal; this is so in the highest degree; its leaves are expressly for the healing of the nations. It is human nature's catholicon. It yields a balm for every ill and wo connected with the sin-sick family of man. No disease too powerful or malignant for its virtues to remove. It is renowned,

3. For its cooling shade.

This is of the greatest importance in the sultry regions of the East; and this idea is often associated with the descriptions given of Messiah. "He shall be," says the prophet, "as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land." He also represents him as "a refuge from the storm, and a shadow from the heat." And he says: "There shall be a tabernacle for a shadow in the day-time from the heat;" Isai. iv. 6; xxv. 4; xxxii. 2. Under the cooling shade of this plant the believing soul sits with great delight. It is renowned,

4. For its vast extent.

Its branches are only bounded by the circumference of the globe itself. It is the world's plant, for the benefit of all the nations that dwell on the earth. "He is the propitiation for the sins of the world;" and his gospel is to be preached to every creature. This plant is renowned,

5. For perpetual verdure.

It is an evergreen; its leaves never fade, and its virtues never fail. To this plant believing souls have had recourse in every age down from Abel, to the present hour; and its fruit shall form the provision of the heavenly banquet forever and ever. Observe,

III. *Its predicted Exaltation.*

"I will raise up for them a plant," &c. This was in part realized, in the ancient types and sacrifices. All these referred to the Saviour, and shadowed forth the office he should sustain, and the sufferings he should endure. The same refers to the prophecies and promises of which Christ was the sum and substance. But the exaltation predicted may refer more properly,

1. To Christ's incarnation.

Hence, Zacharias rejoiced and sang. "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel," &c., "for he hath raised up an horn of salvation," &c. Simeon, also, exclaimed. "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation," &c.; Luke i. 67; ii. 29, &c. He was exalted or raised up,

2. At his baptism.

Now, he was called from obscurity, and publicly anointed for his great work, by the Holy Ghost descending upon him, and the Father attesting his divine character and mission in a voice from the excellent glory, saying: "This is my beloved Son," &c. The prediction was accomplished literally,

3. When he was raised up on the cross.

Peter remarks, that God had predetermined that Christ should thus be put to death. And Christ referred to the manner of his death, when he said, "If I be lifted up from the earth, I will draw all men unto me;" John xii. 32. See also John iii. 14, 15. But he was raised up on the cross that he might be cut down, and he was cut down publicly, amidst the execrations of the infuriated and blood-thirsty populace; amidst the weepings and wailings of his disciples, and of many of the daughters of Israel; cut down amidst the triumph of wicked men, and the acclamations of fallen spirits; amidst the rending of the veil—cleaving asunder of rocks—the opening of graves—earthquake—darkness, &c.; cut down, a spectacle to devils, angels, and men. This predicted exaltation was realized,

4. By his resurrection from the dead.

He was indeed slain, dead and buried but it was not possible that he should be holden of death. He was raised with power and glory from the dead the third day. He was raised up,

5. By his exaltation to his Father's throne and glory.

He is now exalted to the right hand of the majesty on high. Above all principality and power; enjoying universal authority and power. "Sit thou on my right hand," &c. "Exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour," &c. Raised up,

6. By the preaching of the cross.

Grand end of the gospel ministry to exhibit this plant; to specify its properties, and to persuade men to a trial of its saving virtues. Christ is the Alpha and Omega of evangelical preaching. This plant is, and shall be, exalted or raised up,

7. In the acclamations of the redeemed forever and ever.

On him every eye shall gaze; his glory every tongue shall confess; and the whole company of the redeemed shall sing one song, viz.: "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain." &c. Rev. v. 12; vii. 9.

APPLICATION.

1. How stands this plant in our estimation? Do we admire it? Have we received its healing virtues? Do we feed upon its delightful fruit?

2. Let the church exalt the plant. In all things may He have the pre-eminence. Children of Zion, be joyful in your King.

3. Let his fame be spread abroad; that the guilty sons of men may repair to him, and obtain life and salvation.

SKETCH XIX.

CHRISTIAN JOY.

"The joy of the Lord is your strength." *Neh.* viii. 10.

"The sorrows of the mind
Be banished from this place;
Religion never was designed
To make our pleasures less."

So sang the devotional poet of our country; and it is a sentiment as scriptural as it is pleasing. The Christian has every reason to be cheerful, and his heavenly calling entitles him to rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory. Christian joy is our subject.

Let us, then, I. Define its Nature. II. Describe its Peculiar Characteristic. And then, III. Notice its Important Influence.

In reference to Christian joy, let us,

I. *Define its Nature.*

Joy is a passion of the mind which produces gladness and exultation. Christian joy is a spiritual elevation of soul, and is,

1. Founded in spiritual knowledge.

A knowledge of ourselves, and an experimental and saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. Soul exclaims: "I have found him of whom Moses in the law," &c. Disciples glad when they saw the Lord. Woman and lost piece of money. Man and pearl of great price. Christian joy is,

2. The result of faith.

Waited patiently for the Lord, &c. New song into my mouth, &c.; Psal. xl. 12. "Yet believing, we rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory." 1 Peter i. 8. Christian joy is always,

3. Sanctifying in its nature.

Not unholy joy. Not the joy of the worldling, miser, sensualist; but it is hallowed, and ebbs or flows according to the gracious state and experience of the heart. It is,

4. Enduring in its character.

Does not always endure in the same degree or freshness. May occasionally be interrupted or beclouded, but the principle endures. The source, and medium, and occasion of the joy always remain. It is joy that no enemy can destroy: sickness does not impair it, death does not annihilate it; it buds in the grave, and blossoms in eternity. Let us

II. *Describe its Peculiar Characteristic.*

It is "joy of the Lord."

1. It is joy to which he calls us.

"Rejoice in the Lord always," &c. "Rejoice evermore," &c. "Light is sown for the righteous, and joy for the upright in heart." Psal. xxxiii. 1; xcvii. 12; Phil. iv. 4.

2. It is joy which he imparts to us.

He calls us to it, that he may impart it. He calls to repentance, and gives it; to peace, and bestows it; to holiness, and makes us holy. It is the fruit of his own Spirit, which he gives to all his children. Fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, &c.; Gal. v. 22.

3. It is joy which we have in him.

Not only from him, but in him. "We also joy in God," &c.; Rom. v. 11. "I will go unto God, my exceeding joy;" Ps. xliii. 4. The Christian has joy in his name, "Abba, Father." In his perfections, providence, grace. He is the soul's great end, and chief good. "Whom have I in heaven," &c

4. It is joy resembling his.

God's peace is given to the Christian believer; Phil. iv. 7. The Divine Redeemer says, "These things have I spoken, that my joy might remain in you;" John xv. 11. He also prays that his joy may be fulfilled in themselves. It is God's nature imparted to us that makes us holy, and his joy that makes us happy. Consider then,

III. *Its Important Influence.*

"The joy of the Lord is your strength."

It is our strength, as health is the source of strength to the body. It gives vigor to the soul, and elasticity to the powers of the mind. It places the Christian on high vantage ground, where he can be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. The joy of the Lord is the Christian's strength,

1. In duties.

How easy to the rejoicing Christian is every command! He runs with pleasure to do God's will. He feels that his yoke is easy, and his burden truly light. It is his strength,

2. In difficulties.

Crosses will be cheerfully taken up. Mountains removed. Enemies overcome. The joyful Christian can do all things through Christ, &c. It is his strength,

3. In suffering.

"I had fainted unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord," &c. He rejoices because, though the outward man perish, the inward man is renewed day by day. Besides, this joy sustains him, and prevents despondency. He reckons that the afflictions of the present time, &c. Rom. viii. 18, to end.

4. It is his joy in death.

He feels that to live is Christ, but to die is gain. When nature is breaking up, nothing can yield him support but this. Friends cannot—riches cannot—ordinances cannot. But when heart and flesh fail, God is the strength of his heart, and his portion forever.

APPLICATION.

Christian professors, is the joy of the Lord your strength? Then,

1. Cultivate it, by reading, meditation, and prayer—by close communion with God. By spiritual diligence, &c. Cultivate it earnestly, constantly, &c.

2. Appreciate it. How valuable it is or rather how invaluable! It is unspeakably glorious, and indescribably precious.

3. Exhibit it. It is your duty, that others may see and admire the grace of God that is within you.

4. Recommend it. How many are seeking joy! Tell them of this; invite them to participate in it, refer them to its source and medium; speak of its freeness, fulness, &c.

5. Anticipate its consummation in glory. Path of the just as the shining light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day.

SKETCH XX.

THE WELLS OF SALVATION.

"Therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation."—*Isaiah* xii. 3.

THIS chapter evidently refers to the glory of the gospel age. It appears to contain the church's triumph, in the manifestation of God as the salvation of his people, and the felicity with which they should receive the communications of his grace. The Jews generally adopted these words on the last day of the feast of tabernacles, when they went in companies to draw water from the pool of Siloam; and it was on one of these occasions that the blessed Redeemer stood up and cried,—"If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink," &c.; John vii. 37.

Let us consider, I. The Water; II. The Wells; III. The Drawing; and IV. The Joy.

I. *The Water*

There is no metaphor more frequently employed, to set forth the blessings of the gospel, than that of water. It is employed by prophets; Isai. xxxv. 6; lv. 1; Ezek. xxxvi. 3; by John, Rev. xxi. 6; and, as we have seen, by the Saviour himself; John iv. 14.

The blessings of the gospel may be compared to water on account,

1. Of their refreshing and fertilizing properties.

As water refreshes the parched earth, so the mind receives peace and comfort, and is made fruitful by an experimental ac-

quaintance with the blessing of redeeming grace. It is by the grace of God, that the barren desert of the soul is made to bud and blossom as the rose, and to yield fruits of righteousness to the glory of God.

The blessings of the gospel may be likened to water,

2. For their purifying influence.

Water is made use of to cleanse and purify; so, the blessings of salvation not only make us happier, but better. They remove the foul stains of nature's defilement, purify the conscience, and make the children of God a peculiar people, zealous of good works.

3. For their essentiality to life.

Water is indispensable to human existence; so, the blessings of the gospel are essential to spiritual life; no life of justification, or holiness, or eternal life, without them. Often spoken of as living waters, water of life, &c.

4. For their adaptation to the universal family of man.

Water is necessary to every country and climate; it suits men of all grades, and color, and rank; so, the blessings of the gospel are adapted to the exigencies of the whole human race.

"Suited to every sinner's case,
Who hears the joyful sound."

Notice,

II. *The Wells.*

Properly speaking, God is the well or fountain, agreeably with his own statement, in reference to Israel, "Who had forsaken him, the living fountain," &c. In this sense, Christ is the channel or medium of communication; and the Holy Spirit, the water.

But keeping up the figure of the text, we observe,

1. That Christ is a well of salvation.

In him all the fulness of salvation is treasured up. He is full both of grace and truth. Hence, he addressed the woman of Samaria: "If thou hadst asked of me, I would have given thee living water" &c.

2. The Scriptures are wells of salvation.

The prophecies are full of it; so are the gospels, and also the epistles. "Search the Scriptures," &c. "Able to make thee wise unto salvation," &c.

3. The ordinances are wells of salvation.

Public preaching of the gospel: "Ho, every one that thirsteth," &c. Baptism, Lord's Supper, &c.

Let us consider,

III. *The Drawing.*

"Ye shall draw water," &c. It implies,

1. That the wells are approached.

We must come to the wells. "Draw near to God," &c. "Hear his word," &c.

2. There must be personal application.

There must be an instrument; and the only one is believing prayer. "Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord," &c. We must employ this instrument, and ask importunately and perseveringly for them. The application,

3. Must be continued.

This water will be necessary through all our journey.

"Weaker than a bruised reed,
Grace we every moment need"

Notice,

IV. *The Joy.*

"With joy ye shall draw water out of the wells of salvation."

They draw the water of salvation with joy,

1. Because of its unrestricted freeness.

Way to the wells is open, access easy, no cherubim with flaming sword to prevent the sinner's approach. Free to every rank and order of sinners. Free to each and every child of man. "Whosoever will, may come," &c. "Father invites, and the Spirit and the Bride say, Come," &c. And Christ says, "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." And not only are all invited, but there is—

"Enough for all, enough for each,
Enough for evermore."

Like the sea, ever supplying the earth with water, yet ever full. Like the sun, ever shining, yet whose rays are undiminished in power and glory. They draw with joy,

2. Because of the gratuitous terms of communication.

"Without money and without price" "Ask and receive."

3. Because of the felicity it affords.

They who drink of these streams thirst no more after the perishing vanities of the world. They possess righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Ghost. They draw with joy,

4. Because of the hope it inspires.

This water is within them as a well of water springing up to eternal life. This

s the earnest or pledge of those waters hat roll clear as crystal from between the hrone of God and the Lamb, of which hey shall drink forever.

And, as the poet sings,

"The thoughts of such amazing bliss
Should constant joys create."

APPLICATION.

1. Let us rejoice in the abundant provision made for us in the gospel. 2. Let thirsty souls freely partake, and live forever 3. Those who despise or neglect these streams must necessarily perish.

SKETCH XXI.

JACOB'S VISION

"And he lighted upon a certain place, and tarried nere all night."—*Gen.* xxviii. 11–22.

JACOB was now fleeing from the face of Esau, and was on his way to Padan-aram. The first day he journeyed about forty-eight miles, and arrived at a place originally called Luz, but which, on account of the vision he had there, he afterwards called Beth-el. There never was a scene more truly solemn and interesting, than that with which the patriarch was favored on this memorable occasion. It was designed for his instruction and support; and the devout Christian, in reviewing it in the spirit of devout contemplation, cannot fail to receive both information and comfort from it.

Let us, then, notice,

I. *What Jacob saw on this Occasion.*

Overcome with the fatigue of the journey, he had selected a spot of ground for his couch, a stone for his pillow, and the outstretched canopy of heaven for his only covering. Wearied nature was recruiting her energies by balmy sleep, when God was pleased to manifest himself to his servant, through the medium of a striking vision or dream.

1. The object presented to his notice was a ladder.

2. Its position—

Between heaven and earth, filling the whole of the vast space between the two.

3. Its base—

Rested on the earth, close to the spot where he lay.

4. The top of it—

Reached to heaven, the palace of Deity.

5. Above it—

Watching it, and viewing it with complacency and delight, stood the Lord, Jehovah of Hosts.

6. Upon it—

Were angels, the spiritual host of God, and they were ascending and descending as messengers, bearing tidings from heaven to earth, from God to man.

The appearance of the ladder might be intended to illustrate,

(1) The doctrine of divine providence. Both heaven and earth are under the divine government. Both worlds connected. God's eye constantly directed to the concerns of men. Angels minister to the necessities of the saints. This was eminently calculated to console the mind of Jacob in his present circumstances.

It might be intended to prefigure,

(2) The mediatorial work of Christ. Jesus is, emphatically, the sinners' ladder, or way to heaven. None can come to God but by him. He has reconciled heaven to earth. The Father looks upon men, through the work of his Son, with pleasure and delight. Angels, too, are now incorporated with believers, form a distinguished branch of this one family, and are all ministering spirits to those who shall be heirs of salvation; John xiv. 6; Heb. i. 14. Notice,

II. *What Jacob heard.*

"And the Lord said, I am the Lord God of Abraham," &c. Here Deity,

1. Proclaimed himself the God of his fathers.

"God of Abraham and Isaac," &c. He who had made them a separate people, distinguished them, blessed them, &c. Him whom they had worshipped, trusted, &c.

2. He promised him the possession of the country where he then was.

"The land whereon thou liest," &c.; ver. 15.

3. He promised him a numerous progeny; and that of him should come the illustrious Messiah, in whom all the families of the earth should be blessed.

4. He promised him his divine presence and protection.

"I am with thee, and will keep thee,' &c. This promise extended to all times and to all places, and to the end of life. "I will not leave thee until I have done that which I have spoken," &c.; ver. 15. How condescending and gracious on the

part of Deity! What comfort for Jacob! Yet how infinitely short of those rich promises given to believers in the gospel! Notice,

III. *What Jacob felt.*

"And Jacob awaked out of his sleep, and he said: Surely the Lord is in this place;" ver. 16.

1. He felt the influence of the Divine Presence.

"The Lord is in this place."

2. He felt a sacred and solemn fear.

"And he was afraid, and said: How dreadful is this place!" Where God is, how solemn! Angels prostrate themselves before him, &c.

3. He felt himself on the precincts of the heavenly world.

"This is none other than the house of God, and the gate of heaven." Where God reveals his glory is heaven. He might well exclaim thus; for here he was surrounded with heavenly intelligences—had a vision of Jehovah, &c. Notice,

IV. *What Jacob did.*

1. He expressed his solemn sense of the Divine Presence. Ver. 16, 17.

2. He erected and consecrated a memorial of the events of that eventful night.

Took the stone—made a pillow—poured oil upon it—called the place Beth-el. How pious! God had honored him, and he now desired to erect a monument to his glory. How necessary to keep up in his mind a remembrance of God's gracious manifestation! How proper to give God a public profession of our love, and fear, and obedience!

3. He vowed obedience to the Lord.

Seeing that God had thus engaged to bless and keep him, he now resolved, and publicly avowed his resolution to love God, and to serve him with all his life and substance; ver. 22

4. He went on his way in peace and safety.

How could he fail to proceed in peace and safety, when the Omniscient God guided, and the Almighty God protected him? Yet, this privilege have all his saints.

APPLICATION.

Learn, 1. The privileges of piety. Divine manifestations, promises, &c. In all thy ways acknowledge him," &c.

2 The duties of piety. God distinguishes his people, that they may be brought to holy obedience, and conformity to himself. "I beseech you, brethren, by the mercies of God," &c.; Rom. xii. 1.

3. The delights of public worship. God's house is indeed the gate of heaven. The way to heaven is through his house.

4. How glorious a place is heaven. Where the pure in heart shall see God and dwell in his presence forever!

SKELETON XXIII.

SCRIPTURE CHARACTERS

NO. III.—MORAL CHARACTER OF ABRAHAM

"Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the friend of God."—*James* ii. 23.

ABRAHAM'S history would furnish abundance of matter for many discourses. It is full of rich and instructive incident. At present we shall only glance at those moral qualities which distinguished him as a good man, which have exalted him so highly in the rank of the ancient worthies, and which conferred upon him the truly honorable title of "The Friend of God."

Among the moral excellences of the venerable patriarch, we notice, that he was distinguished,

I. *For strong and lively Faith in God.*

This was the basis of all his other excellences. He believed God. Believed all he revealed, however it might appear opposed to sense and reason; yet he believed, implicitly relied upon God's testimony. In this, he honored the divine power, the divine wisdom, the divine goodness and veracity He believed in God as all-sufficient for the accomplishment of all that he had spoken. His faith, evidently, too, had especial respect to the promised seed, the world's Redeemer. "For by faith he looked forward, and saw Christ's day, and was glad." All true and acceptable piety must be reared on the same foundation. "Without faith it is impossible," &c. He was distinguished,

II. *For his prompt and uniform Obedience.*

His faith was living, and therefore it was productive of good works. He both believed God and obeyed him. When called to leave his home and country he obeyed When called to sacrifice his son, he obeyed In short, he listened to the Lord's voice and walked in all his commandments.

True piety is a practical work; it is heard in the speech, and observed in the lives of God's people. He was distinguished,

III. *As a Man of public and private Devotion.*

It is recorded on the pages of sacred history, that wherever he went, "he erected an altar to the Lord." He publicly worshipped the living God. He did not attempt to conceal his attachment o Jehovah of Hosts. See Gen. xii. 7, and xiii. 18. God demands our public homage, our visible profession.

He also evidently cultivated family worship. In reference to him, God said: "For I know him, that he will command his children," &c.; Gen. xviii. 19. And there can be no doubt, that as "the friend of God," in secret he would hold regular, and close, and constant communion with him. He was distinguished,

IV. *For his Condescension and Peacefulness.*

There is no instance on record, of any thing like lordly assumption and arrogance. How condescendingly he reasoned with Lot! and what an amiable pacific temper he displayed! Gen. xiii. 17. True religion is peaceable, gentle, and full of goodness, &c. He was eminent,

V. *For warm and genuine Hospitality.*

He kindly entertained strangers, and thus had angels for his guests, unawares; Gen. xviii. 1; Heb. xiii 9. He signalized himself,

VI. *As a true and distinguished Philanthropist.*

What a striking proof he gave of this, when he stood before the Lord, pleading on behalf of the devoted cities of the plain! Yes, his supplications on their behalf were so full of mercy, goodness, and sincerity, that, had there been but ten righteous persons in it, the displeasure and wrath of God would have been averted. True philanthropy is that which labors to engage heaven on the side of the miserable and distressed. He was distinguished,

VII. *For Goodness in all his Relative Stations in Life.*

He was a kind and tender husband, an affectionate father, and a humane and benevolent master. He set God before him; rejoiced to do his commandments; enjoyed his favor; and though not absolutely perfect, yet he was so truly devout and sincere, as to receive the exalted appellation of "the friend of God."

He died in a good old age, full of faith and good works; and was raised to a high and distinguished station among the spirits who surround the throne.

APPLICATION.

1. Let us choose the God of Abraham for our God. 2. Let us imitate the righteous conduct of the pious patriarch. And let us, 3. Expect to form a part of that innumerable throng, "who have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb."

SKELETON XXIV

PAUL'S HAPPY EXPERIENCE.

"I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day."—2 *Tim* i. 12.

The religion of Jesus does not produce a spirit of fear, but of love, and power, and of a sound mind. It may expose a man to reproach, to persecution, and even to death; but secures support in trouble, the presence and smile of God in death, and an entrance through the gate into the new and blessed Jerusalem. In religion, if a man lose his life, he shall find it; and what he sacrifices for Christ, he shall receive back again, with ample recompense, at the resurrection of the just. With martyrdom before him, the apostle could remain composed; nay, he could even rejoice; "For he knew in whom he had believed," &c.

Notice, I. The Apostle's Happy Retrospect. II. His Joyous Prospect.

I. *The Apostle's Happy Retrospect.*

"I know whom I have believed," &c.

1. He had believed in Christ.

The circumstances connected with his conversion are fully detailed; how he was arrested on his way to Damascus—his blindness, visit of Ananias, baptism, &c.; his confession of his own life: "I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life that I live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." Gal. ii. 20.

2. He had committed his soul to Christ

He had committed his soul to Christ, that he might save it, keep it, sanctify it. He had consecrated all his powers to promote his honor and glory in the world. He had devoted his all to Christ, and that forever. "Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss," &c. "God forbid that I should glory," &c.

3. He was experimentally satisfied with the object of his faith and trust.

"I know whom I have believed," &c.

He did not merely suspect or guess, but he was confident; there was no need for hesitation, he was conscious that Christ was his Saviour; he knew that he was relying upon him, and that his soul was in his divine keeping. It implies, also, satisfaction with the object of his faith. He not only knew, but was satisfied and happy; and made no scruple of making it all his glory and all his boast. Observe,

II. *His Joyous Prospect.*

"And I am persuaded that he is able to keep what I have committed to him," &c.

1. His prospect related to his preservation.

That he should be kept; that his solemn deposite would be perfectly secure. And, if our souls are in Christ's hands, who shall harm them? Who can pluck them from thence? They shall be kept from all evil, and raised to eternal life.

2. His prospect rested on Christ's ability.

"That he is able to keep." Yes, all power is his, both in heaven and on earth. "Able to save to the uttermost." His arm never wearies, for it is girt with omnipotence.

3. His prospect extended to the judgment-day.

"Against that day." Day of solemn examination; day of destiny and doom; day of signal honor and reward to the saints.

"Then will he own my worthless name
Before his Father's face;
And in the New Jerusalem
Appoint my soul a place"

APPLICATION.

1. True religion is founded on knowledge. The Christian knows himself, and he knows Jesus Christ. The knowledge of his own misery has led him to value and accept the fulness of Christ. 2. True religion must be matter of personal experience. We must have the light of it in our minds, and the feeling sense of it in our hearts. It must be a matter of happy consciousness. 3. True religion ensures safety. Yes; the saints shall be kept by the power of God to eternal salvation. 4 True religion is full of hope. It gives a persuasion of public acceptance and distinction at the last day.

SKELETON XXV.

IMPORTANCE OF REGULAR COMMUNION.

"I must by all means keep this feast."—*Acts* xviii. 21.

It is probable the apostle referred to the feast of the passover, where he would probably meet many old friends, and where he might have a very favorable opportunity of making known the doctrines of the cross of Christ. We select the passage as capable of being very naturally applied to the Christian feast of the Lord's Supper, where the friends of the Redeemer meet to hold communion with Jesus and with one another.

With this use of the text we notice, I. That the ordinance of the supper is a feast. II. That Christ's disciples should by all means keep it. And, III. Some directions for the profitable keeping of the feast.

I. *The Lord's Supper is a Feast.*

As such, it was very beautifully and fully prefigured by the Jewish feast of the passover. The apostle states, that "Christ is our passover sacrificed for us." The symbolical elements are bread and wine; one the indispensable staff, and the other the richest luxury, of life. The spiritual provision is Jesus Christ, or rather the precious benefits flowing to us through his death; including pardon, peace, holiness, joy, and grace for every time of need.

1. It is a royal feast.

Founded and prepared by the King of kings; Matt. xxii. 1, &c.

2. It is a love-feast.

Where Christ's love is displayed to his people, and where they meet to exhibit their love to him, and to each other.

3. It is the Christian's family feast

Where the friends of the Redeemer meet together in their family capacity Where the elder brother is the head, and all the guests brethren. Notice,

II. *That Christ's Disciples should by all means keep this Feast.*

They should do so.

1. Because the Lord has commanded it.

Plainly—affectionately—at a very interesting time.

2. Consistency demands it.

We bear his name; profess to be his disciples. This is the Christian's distinctive ordinance, where they appear professedly as his witnesses and friends.

3. Safety demands it.

No safety except in the way of Christ's commandments and ordinances. Sign of coldness and apathy, when the Lord's Supper is neglected. Often the precursor of apostacy, &c.

4. The Church demands it.

She expects, and she expects reasonably, that her sons and daughters should be found in her solemn assemblies, especially at this holy fraternal feast.

5. The love of Christ demands it.

Shall not that love which brought him to that solemn hour when it was instituted, that love which induced him to be our paschal lamb sacrificed for us; shall not the dying love of our blessed Jesus constrain us to keep this feast?

6. Our own true advantage demands it.

At this feast the provision is rich, suitable, and abundant; we cannot regard it in the exercise of rightly regulated feelings, without receiving benefit to our souls. Here love will be inflamed. Faith strengthened. Hope brightened. Joy and peace abound. Soul be refreshed, and mount up as on the wings of eagles, &c. Let us then specify,

III. *Some Directions for rightly keeping this Feast.*

It should be kept,

1. With deep humiliation of mind.

A sense of God's greatness, the Saviour's sufferings, our own unworthiness, &c., should produce this. Sink into the depths of self-abasement.

2. In the exercise of faith in Christ's precious blood.

Without faith in Christ's blood we cannot be benefited by the feast. It is faith that receives and applies Christ's merits to the soul—that feeds upon him—lives by him, and through him, and in him.

3. With strong feelings of benevolent regard to our fellow-men.

With complacent and strong love to the brethren, and compassion and charity towards all men.

4. In hope of beholding the Saviour at his second coming.

We must "show forth his death till he come." And we must look for this blessed hope, the coming of the Saviour. Expect to be raised to hail his appearing, to mingle with his attendants, to be glorified with him, and to dwell in his presence for evermore

APPLICATION

(1) Regular communicants at Christ's table, value and improve your privileges (2) To those who only occasionally commune, we say, Why be absent from the spiritual banquet? Do not slight your mercies. You are bound by every thing reasonable and sacred to keep this feast. (3) Invite the poor starving sons of men to come to the gospel feast, for "yet there is room"

SKELETON XXVI

ASCENSION OF CHRIST

"While they beheld, he was taken up, and a cloud received him out of their sight."—*Acts* i. 9

THE ascension of Jesus is a subject truly interesting to the contemplative Christian. It was the last link of that golden chain of events connected with the life and work of the Son of God upon earth. Notice, then,

I. *That the Ascension of Christ was previously typified and predicted.*

1 It was typified,

By the entrance of the High Priest, with the blood of the annual sacrifice, once a year into the holiest of all: Lev. xvi. 1 Heb. ix. 7. The ascension of Christ,

2. Was predicted.

(1) By David; Psal. xlvii. 5; and cx. 1

(2) By Daniel; Dan. vii. 13, 14.

(3) By the Saviour himself: John xx 17. "I ascend," &c. Notice,

II. *The Circumstances connected with it*

1. The time of his ascension.

Forty days after his resurrection. He remained so long among his disciples, that they might be certain of his identity and resurrection; and that he might more fully instruct, qualify, and commission them for their great work

2. The place of his ascension.

Mount Olivet. Most of the important events in the life of Christ were connected with mountains. On one of these he delivered his famous sermon to the people. On another, was transfigured. On Mount Calvary, crucified. And now from Olivet he ascends to glory.

3. The circumstances connected with his ascension.

He led his disciples out as far as Bethany, lifted up his hands, and blessed them; gave them, as his last act, an infallible sign of his love to them, and his interest in them. He came to bless men; and all his acts were for the benefit of mankind. He retained the same benevolent feeling to the last, "For while he blessed them, he was parted from them," &c. Notice,

4. The manner of his ascension.

It was local, visible, real; as a proof of which, a cloud overshadowed him, and on its wings he arose to the throne of God.

5. The witnesses of his ascension.

The disciples saw him ascend; and two angels attested the same fact. "While they looked up," &c.; Acts x. 11.

6. The place to which he ascended.

The angels said he was ascended to heaven—to God's imperial palace—to the fulness of the Divine Presence. "I ascend to my Father," &c. "Far above all principality and power, even to the right hand of the majesty," &c. "Sit thou on my right hand," &c. "Thy throne, O God," &c.; Heb. i. 3, to end. Consider,

III. *The Grand End and Design of Christ's Ascension.*

1. He ascended to show that he had finished his mediatorial work on earth.

He had fulfilled all the terms and stipulations of the covenant he had made with the Father; John xvii. 1–4.

2. He ascended as a triumphant conqueror over all his enemies.

Purged our sins—blotted out the handwriting, &c.—spoiled principalities and powers, &c.—overcame death and the grave. And now, therefore, in triumph he returns to his native kingdom and throne.

3. He ascended as the representative of his people, and took possession of heaven on their behalf.

"I ascend to my Father and to your Father," &c. "I go to prepare a place for you," &c.; John xiv 1–3

4. He ascended that he might send down his Holy Spirit.

"If I go away I will send the Holy Ghost," &c.; John xiv. 26, &c.; xvi. 7 &c. He told his disciples to wait for this at Jerusalem; Acts i. 4.

5. He ascended that he might be the public advocate of his people in the court of heaven.

Heb. vi. 20; vii. 25, &c.; ix. 24; 1 John ii. 1.

6. He ascended that he might exercise dominion, and receive the homage of both worlds.

"All things are put under his feet, and he is head over all things," &c.; Eph. i. 21, 22. He expects all the homage and service of saints on earth; and before him every knee shall bow, every tongue confess, all the host of heaven fall prostrate, &c.; Rev. v. 9, &c.

7. He ascended that he might receive to himself the spirits of departed saints.

Stephen commended his spirit unto him. Paul also. He is the Lord of life and death, and he alone opens the gates of paradise, and bestows the crown of eternal life.

APPLICATION.

(1) Let us rejoice in Christ's ascension. (2) Let us place all our concerns in his hands. (3) Approach the Father only through him. And (4) Look for his second and glorious appearance, when he shall come without a sin-offering unto salvation

SKELETON XXVII.

THE SPIRIT THE ONLY SOURCE OF SUCCESS.

"Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit saith the Lord of Hosts."—*Zech.* iv. 6.

THE Jews were now engaged in repairing the walls of their city, and rebuilding the temple of the Lord. Their enemies were numerous—difficulties almost insurmountable; consequently their prospects were often gloomy. The prophet was directed to encourage them; and he did this by assuring them that their undertaking would certainly succeed, for it was not by might, nor by power, but by the Spirit of the Lord of Hosts. These remarks are equally applicable to the erection of Christ's

church on earth; and to this end we shall consider the sentiment of the text on the present occasion.

Observe, then, I. On what Christ's Cause does not depend—not on human might or power. II. On what it does depend—the Spirit of the Lord of Hosts. And, III. The Advantages arising from this Arrangement. Notice, then,

I. *On what Christ's Cause does not depend.*

Not on human might or power. By Christ's cause, we mean the cause of his holy and redeemed church. That cause of truth, and piety, and love, which is destined to be established throughout the habitable earth. Observe, then, This cause is not by might nor power, as it does not depend,

1. On human patronage or authority.

Human institutions require these—cannot dispense with them. But Christ's cause consults not the wishes of monarchs, seeks not the smiles and favors of the great and noble of the earth, and never prospered so well as when the princes and rulers of the world were combined against it. No sooner did the world smile upon this cause, and give it its ungodly support, than its beauty, spirituality, and power became seriously impaired. The storms of persecution never did half so much mischief to true religion, as the secularizing spirit introduced by Constantine, and afterwards extended by those identified with the Roman hierarchy. Christ's cause does not depend,

2. On human force, or the power of arms.

These are necessary in the defence of earthly kingdoms, but quite unlawful in the support of the kingdom of Christ. See Christ's address to Peter, Matt. xxvi. 51. Human force and arms may terrify, but will never convert; may compel men to drag their bodies into the outer court, but will never bring a sinner into the holiest of all. They make hypocrites and tinsel professors, but they never force men to possess the genuine spirit of true Christianity. Neither does Christ's cause depend,

3. On the carnal policy or wisdom of man.

This is ever seen in the courts and cabinets of earthly princes. History of nations full of it. This is the base of the throne of Antichrist. But Christ's cause is inseparably connected with truth and simplicity. Truth is her watchword—her defence is truth—and her success is only promoted by an extension of truth. Neither does it depend,

4. On the riches, learning, or eloquence of her friends.

All these, when sanctified, are calculated to be useful; but they are not essential. See the selection Christ made; he did not call the rulers of the earth, nor yet Jewish Rabbies, to be the ministers of his kingdom, but he selected fishermen and tax-gathers; men without learning, or riches, or influence. And these, with a message hateful to the Jews, and foolishness to the Greeks, turned men from darkness to light and from the power of Satan unto God. But how did they do it? Because it was "not by might," &c. Observe, then,

II. *The Cause of Christ depends on the Spirit of God.*

"But by my Spirit, saith the Lord of Hosts."

1. The Spirit qualifies the instruments employed.

"Who is sufficient for these things?" &c. Ministerial sufficiency is of God Moses and Aaron, Joshua, Caleb, Samson, and Jephtha were all imbued with it. So Isaiah—so the apostles waited for the Spirit in Jerusalem—so all gospel ministers are only rightly qualified in this way. The knowledge, zeal, and power of communication requisite, proceed only from the Spirit of God; 1 Cor. xii. 8, &c.

2. The Spirit makes the means effectual.

The gospel is a sword, but the Spirit wields it—hammer, but the Spirit gives it force. It is powerful to enlighten—to convince—to subdue—to regenerate—to sanctify; but none of these things will be effected by the word alone. The gospel is "the power of God to salvation." "Our weapons are only mighty through God," &c. "Paul may plant," &c. Same remarks apply to prayer, praise, and every gospel ordinance and institution; which are all nothing without the Spirit of the Lord of Hosts; 1 Cor. iii. 7, &c. Notice then,

III. *The Advantages arising from this Arrangement.*

1. It keeps the Church from despondency

"God is in the midst of her," &c.; Psalm xlvi. 1–8.

2. It ensures success.

God's work must be done—his plans cannot fail—all he has said shall be accomplished; Dan. iv. 34.

3. It gives all the glory to God.

None can glory in his presence. His wisdom contrived, his arm executed, and his Spirit effects the complete salvation of his people. Who is Paul, or Cephas, or Apollos? Who are ministers or friends? All worms of the earth; but the Saviour of the church is the Lord, by whom the heavens were created. All the angels and saints in heaven can sing, "Not unto us, but to thy name, O God, be all the glory."

APPLICATION

Observe, 1. The text does not exclude human instrumentality. God works by the use of means, in grace as well as in nature. These instruments are to be duly appreciated, and highly honored for their work's sake. 2. It shows the necessity of divine influence. How necessary that we feel its importance, and seek it by fervent and constant prayer. 3. The triumph of the church is certain. It has already survived the cruelty of Pharaoh, the combination of the Canaanitish kings—the fiery ordeal of a Herod, and of a Nero—the malignant purposes of a Julian, and the blood-thirsty attacks of French infidelity; and most assuredly, the truth is mighty above all things, and shall ultimately prevail; for its basis is laid in the immutable omnipotence of God

SKELETON XXVIII.

THE DUMB SPIRIT CAST OUT

"And one of the multitude answered and said unto him, Master, I have brought unto thee my son, which hath a dumb spirit."—*Mark* xi. 17.

In this affecting narrative we have three things, calculated both to instruct and profit us.

I. *The Case of the Sufferer.*

1. He was under the influence of an evil spirit.

Satan seems to have exerted great influence both on the bodies and souls of men, at the time of Christ's appearance on earth. Perhaps it was permitted, that Christ's power might be more manifest. This child is a fit emblem of the sinner—every man in his natural state under the power of the prince of darkness. Notice

2. The effects of this influence.

(1) He was dumb. Gift of speech of incalculable worth.

(2) He often tore him, and cast him into the fire and into the water; ver. 22.

(3) The consequence was, he pined away. Health destroyed—constitution broken—symptoms of death were evident; ver. 18.

(4) He had long been possessed, so that his case appeared hopeless; ver. 21. How applicable is the whole to the sinner's wretched condition! Dumb to prayer and praise; wretched, miserable, &c. In imminent danger; humanly speaking, hopeless. Notice,

II. *The Course adopted by the Father.*

1. He brought him to Jesus.

He had heard of him, seeks him out and presents his child before him. This was both wise and affectionate.

2. He confessed a previous error.

"I spoke to thy disciples, and they could not;" ver. 18. None can save but Jesus. Instruments and ordinances are useful; but they only are so in bringing us to the true Physician.

"None but Jesus,
Can do helpless sinners good."

"To whom shall we go, but unto thee. &c.

3. He fully states the case to Christ.

He does this simply and earnestly, (see ver. 18;) details the whole. How necessary to tell Christ all our condition! He will condescend to hear; and it is a sign we feel our true state.

4. He presents a most fervent prayer on his behalf.

"If thou canst do any thing for us, have compassion on us, and help us," ver. 24. He entreats compassion; then help; the one will always produce the other. He prayed with tears of love to his child—of anxiety, &c. His faith faltered a little as to the power of Christ. "If thou canst." He fully confided in his benevolence, &c. Let the convinced sinner come in like manner to Christ, only resting more implicitly on Christ's almighty arm; seeing "he is able to save to the uttermost," &c. Observe, then,

III. *The Cure wrought by Christ*

Notice,

1. The preliminaries of the cure.

(1) Christ states the potency of faith. If thou canst believe, all things are possible." No fear of my power, if thy faith can lay fast hold of it. Faith can "remove the highest mountains," &c. All things possible to him who believeth, &c.

(2) The man instantly exercises his faith. "Lord, I do believe." I feel every word of thine to be giving me additional confidence—all my energies are in this matter.

(3) He laments, and strives against the remains of unbelief. "Help thou mine unbelief." He did this with tears; he felt that Christ had thrown the cure upon his faith, and all his feelings were excited lest that faith should be insufficient. Observe,

(4) Satan raged with increased fury—employed all his power to retain his possession. Child appeared as if dead in the dreadful conflict.

2. The cure itself.

Christ now entered upon his blessed work of saving the child, and destroying the works of the devil; and,

(1) He rebuked the foul spirit, and commanded him to come out. Christ's power made the spirit to tremble, and relinquish his possession, ver. 25.

(2) He forbade his re-entrance. "And enter no more into him." How desirable this! how perfect the cure! how happy the child!

(3) He took him by the hand, and he arose. He did this to comfort and encourage, to support and strengthen.

APPLICATION.

1. Learn Christ's all-sufficiency to save from all present and from all future evils. 2. Learn the right and acceptable way of coming to him—by persevering, believing prayer. 3. The success that shall invariably attend importunate application to him for his saving aid. He will hear—he will compassionate—he will save.

SKETCH XXII.

CHRISTIAN MERCY

"Blessed are the merciful; for they shall obtain mercy"—*Matt* v. 7

We must take care in reading the promises, to observe, that they are invariably made to believers. Pardon and acceptance, peace and sanctification, can only be enjoyed through believing. And all the gracious declarations of God are only realized through the same medium. But after our acceptance, the present and future rewards which God has revealed to his people, will be bestowed in proportion to our Christian diligence and usefulness. Hence, a liberal Christian shall be established by liberal things; a useful Christian, who improves his talents, shall rule over many cities; and a Christian who suffers with and for Christ, is assured, that these sufferings shall work out for him "a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory!" So, in the blessings pronounced by the Saviour, The peace-makers shall be called God's children; the mourners shall have comfort; the pure in heart shall see God and the merciful shall obtain mercy.

The subject is Christian Mercy. Let us consider, Its Nature—Grounds—and Reward.

I. *The Nature of Christian Mercy.*

The word is derived from the Latin word, *misericordia*, which signifies pain of heart, arising from a sight of misery. It is commonly used, however, for goodness mildness, clemency, tenderness, and pity. It may be defined, a disposition of mind to feel for, and to relieve, the misery of those around us.

We notice, then, that Christian mercy,

1. Has its seat in the heart.

It is not a mere external quality or accomplishment; not a cold theoretical principle of the mind; but it is identified with all the feelings and sympathies of the soul. "Put on bowels of mercies;" Col. iii. 12.

Christian mercy,

2. Is a supernatural quality.

It does not dwell in the unrenewed nature of man. The capacity every human being possesses; the same as the human mind possesses a capacity for knowledge faith, &c. But it requires the stony principle to be taken away, and the heart of flesh implanted, before it can be rightly exercised. There may be much generosity and kindness of disposition; but Christian mercy is only produced by the softening influences of the Spirit on the heart. "The wisdom from above is full of mercy." Jas. iii. 17.

Christian mercy is,

3. An active principle.

It will be seen in producing works of mercy. Head will devise plans of mercy; tongue will plead in the cause of mercy; hands will distribute to the objects of mercy.

Christian mercy will be manifested,

(1) Towards the inferior animals. These are all God's creatures, who cares for them, watches over them, and supplies all their wants.

> "The beasts with food his hands supply
> And the young ravens when they cry."

See Prov. xii. 10.

We cannot give unnecessary pain to these, without insulting the great Being who made them, and without displaying the basest ingratitude for his goodness who has provided them for our use.

It will be manifested,

(2) To those of our fellow-creatures who are under bodily affliction and misery. To the hungry and starving; to the naked and homeless; to the widow and fatherless; and to those who are laboring under sickness and pain, we shall extend our hand of kindness and mercy. We shall not say, Be filled, be clothed, &c.; but shall minister to their necessities according as God hath blessed us. See Job's testimony, chap. xxxi. 13, &c. Psalm cxii. 4, &c. Also, the parable of the good Samaritan, and 1 John iii. 17.

It will extend,

(3) To the spiritual miseries of our fellow-men. The Christian, while he attends to the cabinet, does not forget the jewel—to the house, does not overlook the inhabitant. He remembers there is a spirit in man; and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth him understanding. This spirit is precious; susceptible of the highest joys or the deepest woes! That it is fallen—in an apostate state—perishing for lack of knowledge. See this in David; "Rivers of water run down mine eyes," &c.; Psal. cxix. 150. Christ had compassion on the multitude, &c.; wept over Jerusalem, &c. Mercy to the soul, is the soul of mercy. Christian mercy will exert herself to snatch sinners as brands from the burning, &c. Instruction, exhortation, prayers, example, &c., will all be employed.

Christian mercy will be manifested,

(4) Towards our greatest enemies. The Saviour has plainly taugh this, Matt. v. 44, 45, &c. This, indeed, is the highest act of mercy; it is peculiarly Christian; nowhere else is it enforced; and by none else will it be practised. Hence, it is also enjoined: "If thine enemy hunger," &c.; Rom. xii. 20. So Christ also poured out his dying breath in prayer for his enemies, Luke xxiii. 34. Notice, then,

II. *The Grounds of Christian Mercy.*

By what principles is the exercise of mercy enforced?

We should be merciful,

1. Because it is strictly enjoined by God.

God hath showed us what is good; one branch of which is, "to love God." We are to love our neighbor as ourselves: and the Saviour has beautifully shown us, in the parable of the good Samaritan, that every man is our neighbor, whose misery we can possibly remove. "Be ye merciful, as your Father," &c.; Luke vi. 36.

2. Because we stand in constant need of divine mercy.

"It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed." His mercy compasses us about as a shield. Did he withdraw it, health and all the comforts of this life would be withdrawn; and before us there would be nothing but a fearful looking for of the great day of the Lord. Surely, if we are so totally dependent on God's mercy, we should manifest the same to our fellow-men.

3. Because our profession binds us to imitate Christ, who is the perfect pattern of mercy.

How it shone in all his actions! How it was exhibited in all his sufferings! In him mercy was embodied. He was "the mercy promised to the fathers," &c. If we are his disciples, then we should walk even as he walked.

4. We should be merciful because of the true pleasure which is associated with acts of mercy.

"It is more blessed to give than to receive." This will equally apply to acts of mercy. It is to resemble Deity in that exercise, in which God himself delighteth. Who can avoid being happy, when they are the instruments of removing misery—giving consolation to the aching breast—wiping away the tear of wretchedness—and causing the heart of anguish to forget its misery, and to dance for joy! An an

gel is not capable of higher felicity, than the luxury of doing good.

But we should be merciful,

5. Because it is an express condition of our obtaining mercy.

"Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy." He shall have judgment without mercy, who hath showed no mercy, Matt. vi. 14, 15, and xviii. 32.

But let us consider,

II. *The Rewards of Christian Mercy.*

We have already referred to the declaration of the text: "He shall obtain mercy." but this promise is very comprehensive, and includes, at least, the following advantages:

1. A good name.

To be called merciful, is to be associated with Deity in one of his most glorious titles, where he is called, "The Father of mercies." To be called great, or powerful, or learned, or rich, is insignificance itself, compared with the name of merciful. All men admire and speak well of mercy. "For such an one some would even dare to die."

2. They shall be peculiarly interested in the kind and merciful arrangements of Divine Providence.

David explicitly states this. "Blessed is he who considereth the poor," &c.; Psal. xli. 1–3; cxix. 9; Prov. iii. 9; xix. 7. The Lord counts it lent to himself; and he has engaged to repay it. I need not say, that God can do this by a thousand ways, which are quite easy to himself. We may rest assured, that he will not forget our labor of love.

The merciful,

3. Are blessed with the prayers and blessings of the miserable whom they have relieved.

The prayers, even of the poor, are not to be despised. God hears them when they cry, and often visits the objects of their supplications with his gracious regards. Job xxix. 12–16. The alms of Cornelius, as well as his prayers, had come up with acceptance before God.

4. They shall be blessed with the public approval of Christ at the last day.

Such are now the recipients of his pardoning mercy; the objects of his especial care; and at last, when all nations are gathered before him, he will acknowledge all our acts of mercy, as done to himself; and will say to the merciful, "I was an hungered," &c.; Matt. xxv. 34–40.

APPLICATION.

1. Let the exercise of mercy be pressed on all Christ's disciples. Cultivate it. Let it be exercised constantly. Let us rejoice in all opportunities of doing good. Keep the divine mercy before our eyes, as the copy we should imitate.

2. Let the mercy of God to us be highly valued. We need it daily. Only one channel for its communication—through Christ. Only one way to obtain it—by faith in his word.

3. The unmerciful shall have judgment without mercy. What a dreadful portion to the guilty sinner!

SKETCH XXIII.

TIME CONSIDERED AND IMPROVED

"But this I say, brethren, the time is short it remaineth, that both they that have wives be as though they had none," &c.—1 *Cor.* vii. 29–31.

The preciousness of time is universally admitted. None think of denying the truth; yet how few act under the influences it is calculated to produce! Time is that of which life is composed; and so truly rare and valuable is it, that we only possess a single moment of it at once; and our possession of another is matter of the greatest uncertainty! Let us, then, not only subscribe to the truth of the text, but embody its design in our experience, and exhibit it in our practice.

In the text there is, I. A solemn and momentous Truth expressed; II. A Chain of practical Inferences deduced; and, III. An impressive and forcible Application made.

Observe,

I. *A solemn and momentous Truth expressed.*

"Brethren, the time is short."

There is a sense in which time, in its extended course from the creation to the present period, may be said to be short when viewed through the medium of the immutable mind of the Deity, with whom "a thousand years are but as one day;" or when contrasted with the unmeasured and boundless eternity.

But the text evidently refers to the time of human life—the period of our existence upon earth. That which is the limit o.

man's probation, and the only seed-time in which he can sow for a golden harvest of immortal blessedness.

That our time is short, will appear,

1. When contrasted with the lives of those in the antediluvian world.

During that period, there is no account of the death of any in childhood or youth. And many, whose lives are recorded, lived to a very extended age. Adam lived 930 years; Seth lived 912 years; and Methuselah 969 years. How greatly abridged is human existence now! Truly, brethren, the time is short. This truth is evident,

2. When viewed through the medium of Scriptural representation.

In order to render the descriptions of the divine word striking and impressive, the language of figure and metaphor is employed. Man's life is spoken of as "a day;" Job xiv. 6: compared to the flight of an "eagle;" Job ix. 26: the "weaver's shuttle"—the "fading leaf"—the "withering grass"—and the "perishing flower;" Job xiv. 6. It is said to be a vapor. And, to present it in the shortest view possible, it is said to be "as nothing before God;" Psalm xxxix. 5.

3. Our time is short, considered abstractly in itself.

It has been computed, that a generation of human beings is limited to about thirty-four or thirty-five years. Suppose, however, we reckon on the data given by the Psalmist, that is, threescore years and ten, or fourscore years. What is this, especially when the necessary deductions are made from it?

Childhood and youth will subtract ten years. Sleep about one-third, or twenty years more. And how much must we reckon, as being uselessly, nay, criminally spent, which if possible had better be blotted out?

It will be seen, that in this way, the man of seventy years, really and truly only lives about half that period.

Then observe, the truth of our time being short is especially evident, if you consider,

4. The great amount of business that has to be crowded within its narrow limits.

Here are the natural, relative, and civil duties of life, besides all the momentous concerns of religion and eternity

"A charge to keep we have,
A God to glorify;
And never-dying souls to save,
And fit them for the sky."

On the present fleeting moments are suspended all the great concerns of an unending state of existence

"A moment's time, an instant's space,
Removes us to the heavenly place,
Or shuts us up in hell!"

Let us notice,

II. *The Chain of Practical Inferences the Apostle deduces from this Truth.*

"It remaineth, that both they that have wives be as though they had none," &c

The inferences all relate to the necessity of moderation in our attachment to, and use of, the things of the present fleeting state. He infers,

1. As to the endearing ties of social life.

"They that have wives," &c. The inference is alike applicable to parents, children, friends, &c. These we are to love and do them all the good in our power. But we are not to idolize them, not reckon upon their continuance; we hold them by a very brittle and tender thread. Behold Abraham weeping over the remains of Sarah; Jacob over Rachel; Ezekiel bereft by a stroke, of the desire of his eyes &c.; Rachel refusing to be comforted &c.

He infers,

2. As to the sorrows of life.

"And they that weep as though they wept not." This world is truly a valley of tears! Many causes. But still, the Christian should not sorrow overmuch. He is not a permanent resident in it.

"Then let our songs abound,
And every tear be dry;
We're marching through Immanuel's ground,
To fairer worlds on high."

But he infers, also,

3. As to the joys of time.

"They that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not." The Christian has his joys, as well as his griefs. It is both his duty and privilege to rejoice in the Lord. But these must be moderated. "Rejoice with trembling." Not to be too much elated on this side Canaan.

4. As to the business of this life.

"They that buy, as though they possessed not." Not to be too deeply immersed in worldly concerns. Not to be too anxious

about the riches of time. Not to idolize created good. Not to be absorbed in our worldly possessions. If riches increase, not to set our hearts upon them. The rich fool. He infers,

5. As to the proper use of the world.

"They that use this world, as not abusing it." To use the world is, with thankfulness to receive God's creatures, and to apply them to their intended design with moderation and prayer. To abuse it, is to pervert it—to waste it—to apply it to worthless and criminal purposes. To use it, is to act with it, and lay it out as stewards who must give a full and solemn account for its possession. To use it as a traveller uses the inn, where he tarries for the night; or as the passenger, who accommodates himself to the vessel till he reaches the destined port. Use it as the pilgrim does his staff, from which he derives assistance, till he arrives at the city of his habitation. Then notice,

III. *The impressive and forcible Application of this Truth.*

"For the fashion of this world passeth away." All the gaudy scenery of this world is perpetually changing, and, like some pompous gorgeous procession, passes away. Its riches, honors, power, all pass away. Its cities and empires pass away. The same applies to beauty, health, strength, and life itself; for they all pass away. The world itself is groaning with age; and speedily shall lose its present fashion, and be burnt up.

APPLICATION.

(1) Highly prize and value time. (2) Wisely expend it. (3) Daily improve it. (4) Live for eternity; by living in Christ, —and to Christ,—and for Christ. (5) Be looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to eternal life.

SKETCH XXIV.

ATTACHMENT TO GOD'S HOUSE

"One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple."—*Psalm* xxvii. 4

Among the various excellencies which distinguished the Psalmist, none was more prominent than that of devout and hearty attachment to the house of God. When driven into solitude, his heart thirsted for the courts of the Lord's house, that he might again appear publicly before him. He could sincerely aver, "I have loved the habitation of thy house, and the place where thine honor dwelleth." He preferred even being a door-keeper in God's house, to dwelling in the tents of wickedness. And in the language of the text, "One thing have I desired," &c. Let us,

I. *Illustrate the Psalmist's Attachment to God's House, as expressed in the text.*

"One thing have I desired," &c. Notice,

1. The objec of his attachment and desire.

"The house of the Lord." God's house is where Deity dwells. In one sense he dwells everywhere—he fills heaven and earth with his presence. He has, however, two distinguished places of residence, —the heaven of heavens, and his church on earth: the one is his sublime and holy habitation, where he is surrounded with the light which no creature can possibly approach unto; in the other, viz., his church on earth, he manifests himself in his gracious regards to the children of his adopted family. Wherever two or three of his children meet together to worship him, that is the Lord's house, and he has pledged himself "to be in the midst of them." Observe,

2. The nature of his attachment and desire.

He desires to "dwell in the house of the Lord," not merely to see it, or hear of it, but to be an abiding resident in it. Now our dwellings are places which we select and choose; where we generally may be found, and in which we take especial interest and delight. Thus the Psalmist had chosen Zion as his most favored residence —here he went up statedly to worship, and its good he always sought; yea, it was his chief joy; Psal. cxxii., &c.

3. The extent and duration of his attachment and desire.

"All the days of my life." He desired to dwell in it, even to the termination of his life. He desired not to exchange it until he should ascend to God's holy hill, and dwell at his right hand, where there are pleasures for evermore. And what place so suited to give experience and wis

dom to the young—to preserve the middle aged from being swallowed up in cares,—or where the old can better wait for the fulness of God's salvation?

4. The great end of this attachment and desire.

"That I may behold the beauty of the Lord, and inquire in his temple."

(1) "To behold the beauty of the Lord." This is seen imprinted on universal nature. The heavens—the earth—and the sea are all full of the beauty and glory of God. But in his courts we see the beauty of holiness; his goodness, his compassion, and his grace—the beauties of redeeming love—his harmonious attributes—his affectionate heart—his smiling face. He desired,

(2) To inquire in his temple. Perhaps in allusion to the ancient oracles to which the heathen warriors and others resorted, to ascertain the result of their undertakings. In God's house the most important and solemn queries are solved. Here, our inquiries after the way of pardon and peace and happiness are all satisfactorily answered. Here, too, the devotional soul can come to the throne of grace, and obtain mercy and grace to help in every time of need. Notice,

5. The pre-eminence of his attachment and desire.

"One thing," &c. That is, above every thing else, and before every thing else. Many other things lawful, and many of them truly desirable but this he longed after more than all, "that he might dwell in the house of the Lord," &c. Then, notice,

6. The resolution connected with this attachment and desire.

"And that will I seek after." He was not satisfied with wishing and desiring, but he would labor to obtain it. Seek after it with ardency of feeling, and with constancy and perseverance. How possible is it to multiply our privileges with care, and by seeking after them! We must be zealous, and faithful, and laborious in religion, if we intend to excel.

7. He had made the object of his soul's attachment a matter of prayer to God.

"Desired it of the Lord." To give him ability and opportunities, and a disposition to appear before him in his courts. A prayer highly acceptable to God, and in every way likely to be answered. Let us,

II. *Vindicate his pre-eminent Attachment to the House of the Lord.*

We vindicate supreme attachment to God's house,

1. From the dignity it confers.

What is the house of science or philosophy to this? What the senate, or the palace of an earthly monarch? Here Deity ever dwells to give audience to his saints.

2. From the happiness bestowed on its hallowed worshippers.

Here light, conviction, pardon, peace, joy, and solid comfort, are richly and freely communicated.

3. From the invaluable lessons we learn in it.

Of God's greatness, goodness, mercy, and doctrines of the cross. Duties of life. Perishableness of all created things. Value of God's favor, &c. David's feet well nigh slipped, till he went into God's house, &c.

4. From its resemblance to the heavenly temple.

In the heavenly temple God displays his glory. There is the vision of God. So is he seen here; and loved, and feared, and praised. Presence of Christ; so he is always in the assemblies of his saints. There is the congregation of the saints union of angels, and scenes of holy joy and worship; so in his house below.

> "They sing the Lamb in hymns above,
> And we in hymns below"

Heaven's joys are here anticipated, and the delights of God's house are happily expressed in the lines of the poet:—

> "I have been there, and oft would go;
> 'Tis like a little heaven below."

APPLICATION.

1. What true joy and peace they deprive themselves of who neglect God's house! 2. Let the subject administer reproof to the merely occasional worshipper; and, 3. Excite all the children of God to greater ardor and zeal for the prosperity of God's house.

SKETCH XXV.

CHRIST'S YOKE.

"Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find

rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."—*Matt* xi. 29, 30.

THE chapter from which the text is selected, commences by recording a message sent from John to Christ, and Christ's reply to that message, ver. 3–6. Christ gives a very high account of the character of John, 7–11; he then censures the people for their neglect both of John's ministry and his own, and shows them what vain pretexts they adopted for neglecting the discourses delivered to them. He then pronounces the doom of Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum, and concludes by the moving and affectionate invitation of the text, "Take my yoke," &c. Notice,

I. *The Yoke he imposes.*

"Take my yoke upon you." A yoke is that which is placed on the neck of the ox, and by which it is placed under restraint. Christ uses the figure to denote, that his religion has its laws and restraints. There is,

1. The yoke of Christ's doctrine.

It demands the prostration of our minds before him. Reception of the humiliating and mysterious doctrines of the cross—those doctrines which are to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness. "By grace are ye saved," &c.

2. The yoke of Christ's laws.

He has not abrogated the moral law, but explained, spiritualized, and enlarged it. Love to enemies, &c. See Matt. v. 6, 7. No true disciples without obedience. "Ye are my friends," &c. "If ye love me, keep my commandments."

3. The yoke of Christ's cross.

"If any man will be my disciple, let him take up his cross," &c. This implies very much. Public profession of Christ—self-denial. If necessary, abandonment of friends, wife, children, houses, land, yea, life itself, for Christ's sake. Notice,

II. *The Lessons he communicates.*

"And learn of me," &c. We are to learn of him, both the doctrines he teaches, the law he enjoins, and the sacrifices he demands. We are to learn of him,

1. By hearkening to the words of his mouth.

He is our prophet, to whom we are always to repair, and to hear him always. "Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." God enjoins it imperatively upon us, "Hear ye him."

2. By imitating his example.

He is our perfect exemplar. He does not enjoin any duty but what he embodied in his own blessed life. He has trod the path, and we are to follow him, and walk in his steps.

3. By imbibing his spirit.

"For I am meek and lowly in heart." We are to have within us Christ's lowly and humble mind. "If any man hath not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his." True piety humbles the mind, and makes the temper gentle and meek. Notice,

III. *The Blessing he promises*

"And ye shall find rest unto your souls." Bodily rest is truly sweet and indispensable, but how much more precious is rest to the soul! The promise includes,

1. Rest from the bondage of sin.

No labor or toil more severe and cruel, and accompanied with more misery than this. Wretched bondage indeed! Satan's slave. Vassalage of sin, &c.

2. Rest from inward disquietude.

Wicked like the troubled sea, restless and agitated. No peace, saith my God, to the wicked—but fear—unceasing dread. "Being justified, we have peace with God," &c. "Cloud of transgressions blotted out." Soul can sing,

> "Now I have found the ground wherein,
> Sure my soul's anchor may remain;
> The wounds of Jesus, for my sin,
> Before the world's foundation slain,
> Whose mercy shall unshaken stay,
> When heaven and earth are fled away."

3. Eternal rest in heaven.

"There remaineth, therefore, a rest to the people of God." From toil, conflict, sorrow, suffering, crosses, &c. Full, uninterrupted, and everlasting; Rev. xiv. 13 To induce sinners to comply with his invitation, observe,

IV. *The motive he adduces.*

"For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." It is so,

1. When contrasted with the yoke of sin.

"What fruit had ye in those things whereof ye are now ashamed?" The yoke of sin is full of the gall of bitterness, and the wages thereof is death. It is so,

2. Compared with any of the various forms or modifications of Paganism.

These are full of the habitations of cruelty. The whole of these systems are written in the blood of their unhappy votaries. Immolated children—burning wid

ows — orture — groans — devastation, and leath in its most terrific and appalling forms. Christ's yoke is full of mercy, gen- eness, peace, and purity. Goodness its essential feature.

3. It is so when compared with the Jewish dispensation.

And that was divine, from heaven, &c. Yet a yoke which they were unable to bear. Consider their numerous services, sacrifices, purifications gifts, &c., &c.

4. It is so in itself

Nothing irrational, nothing degrading, nothing oppressive in Christ's yoke. "His commandments are not grievous." To love God. To believe in Jesus. To be subject to the laws of God, and to the directions and influences of the Spirit. To be full of the fruits of goodness, &c.

5. It is so in the support which is afforded.

Sufficiency of direction and of strength to bear it; and an abundance of peace and joy in the Lord Jesus Christ. "My grace is sufficient for thee." "We can do all things through Christ," &c.

APPLICATION.

1. Appeal to the infatuated slave of sin on the folly of his course.

2. Invite all to try Christ's yoke.

Encourage Christ's disciples to follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth."

SKELETON XXIX.

THE VISIT OF THE WISE MEN TO CHRIST.

"And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child, with Mary his mother," &c. —*Matt.* ii. 11

THERE were several very illustrious events connected with the incarnation of Christ. One of these preceded his birth, viz., the annunciation by the angel to Mary, "Fear not, Mary, for thou hast found favor with God, and, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son," &c.; Luke i. 30. Then there was the appearance of the celestial choir, over the plains of Bethlehem, when they told the astonished shepherds, that there was "born a Saviour, Christ the Lord" &c.; Luke ii. 13. And last of all, about thirteen days after his birth, there was the visit of the eastern sages, who came from afar to yield their homage, and to present their gifts, to the new-born Prince of Life, and Lord of Glory.

Let us notice, I. The Persons. II. The Journey. III. The Worship. And IV The Lessons suggested by the whole.

I. *The Persons.*

1. Their designation.

They are styled wise men, in the original, Magi: the term is applied in Scripture to those who studied astrology, and professed soothsaying and necromancy. The name is often applied to learned persons in general, and particularly to those skilled in astronomy. Very likely such were the persons in the text. Observe,

2. The country from whence they came.

"From the East." Some have supposed that they came from Arabia; and that they are alluded to in Psal. lxxii. 10. But this was south of Judea. Others say, from Chaldea; but this was north. Most likely, therefore, from Persia, as this is east; and especially as astronomy had long been pursued, and formed a favorite study with the Persians. Observe,

II. *The Journey.*

1. The cause of it.

The appearance of a star, not a new planet, but some brilliant light, or fiery meteor; perhaps, that heavenly lustre beheld by the shepherds; Luke ii. 9. At this time, there was a general expectation that some celebrated person would appear. The Jews were expecting their long-predicted deliverer, the Messiah. The wise men viewed the meteor or star as ominous, portending some great event; and they followed its movements.

2. The journey itself.

One of twelve or fourteen days; connected with great fatigue, expense, and danger.

3. Its termination.

They pursued their way and persevered, until they arrived at the place where they found the young child, &c.

III. *The Worship they presented.*

"They fell down," &c In this they manifested,

1. Great faith.

How unlikely to the eye of sense, that this babe was to be an illustrious prince All appearances against it. Poor village humble parents—nothing great—no palace nor splendor, &c.; yet despite of this

they received him as God's Son, the world's Messiah, and worshipped him as such.

2. Great humility.

"Fell down at his feet."

3. Great reverence.

"And they worshipped him." Gave to him supreme honors.

4. Great generosity and self-devotion.

Opened their treasures, and presented to him "gold, and frankincense, and myrrh." The very best their country yielded. Some say, gold they offered him as a Prince; frankincense, as a Priest; and myrrh, as the Messiah, who should be cut off for the sins of the people. Others say, gold, as denoting their faith in him; the frankincense of devotion; and the myrrh of self-denial. Notice,

IV. *The Lessons suggested by the whole.*

It presents,

1. A tacit and public reproof to the Jews.

They paid no regard to the event; received him not. Even the priests at Jerusalem, who directed the wise men, moved not one step themselves. Reserved for strangers—Gentiles, to do honor to the appearance of the Saviour of the world. It presents,

2. An interesting illustration of Divine Providence.

By the visit of the wise men, and the presents they brought, it is likely that the holy family were provided with means to go and remain in Egypt, during the life of the murderous Herod; the beasts gave Christ a dwelling and a cradle; the fish yielded him tribute-money; the Persian Magi supported him in his exile; and the rich gave him a tomb at his death.

3. The true way to obtain wisdom and salvation.

To observe the signs God places before us To follow the leadings of the star of revelation, which is as a light shining in a dark place. The star of a preached gospel; for ministers are stars in the hand of Christ. The star of the Spirit's operation, "until the day dawn, and the day-star arise in your hearts;" 2 Pet. i. 19.

4. The homage which Jesus expects from his people.

We must give him the gold of our heart's love and confidence; the incense of our prayers and praise; and the myrrh of our obedience and self-denial. "If any man will be my disciple, let him take up his cross and follow me."

5. Those who neglect the star of Christ must remain in darkness, unbelief, and sin.

And "he that believeth not in Christ is condemned already, and the wrath of God abideth on him."

SKELETON XXX.

THE WOMAN THAT WAS A SINNER.

"And, behold, a woman in the city, which was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at meat in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster box of ointment."—*Luke* vii. 37, 38.

OBSERVE, in this very interesting narrative, I. The Person described. II. The Course she adopted. And, III. The Public Testimony she received. Notice,

I. *The Person described.*

"And, behold, a woman in the city which was a sinner."

1. She was a sinner.

And this applies to all the children of the human family. "All have sinned," &c. In common, then, with others, she possessed a depraved nature—heart of unbelief—practically delinquent, &c. But there can be no doubt, that she was,

2. A notorious sinner.

Distinguished as such. There are degrees of sin. It has been supposed that she was a public woman—abandoned, dissipated, and universally known as such. A sinner above most of the inhabitants where she dwelt. But it is equally evident,

3. That she was a mourning and deeply-penitent sinner.

Her eyes had been opened—her heart deeply affected with her lost estate. An anxious Christ-seeking sinner.

This leads us, therefore, to contemplate

II. *The Course which she adopted.*

"When she knew that Jesus sat at meat," &c. She had heard of Jesus Most likely, had been brought to her present state by his heavenly discourses; and knowing now where he was to be found she hastens to the house where he sat at meat, &c. Observe in her conduct.

1. Strong desires after the Saviour.

It must have been no small cross, for such a person as herself to venture into the dwelling of a proud, imperious, self-righteous Pharisee. Notwithstanding, hearing that Christ was there, she overcame

the difficulty, and came into his presence. Notice.

2. Her deep humility and lowliness of mind.

Christ was reclining on a couch, as it is the custom in the East; she did not, therefore, intrude her presence so as to interrupt the Saviour, but took the lowest place, and "stood at his feet, behind him" Observe,

3 Her signs of deep contrition.

"She bathed his feet with tears." Her soul appeared to be melted within her, and to flow so copiously as to provide a stream sufficient to wash the precious feet of Christ! "Blessed are they that mourn," &c. "They that sow in tears shall reap in joy." Observe,

4. Her true and hearty affection to Christ.

"She wiped his feet with the hair of her head, and kissed his feet." Her hair, that which is generally the pride of her sex, she employs as a towel; and with glowing ardor of attachment, she ceases not to salute his feet. Notice,

5. Her liberality and devotedness to Christ.

She brings a precious box of fragrant ointment, worth about ten pounds of our money, and pours it upon him, and thus anointed his feet. Perhaps, this was of the best she possessed of an earthly nature, probably her all; yet it is freely and cheerfully devoted to Christ. The power of Christ's constraining love. If this person was Mary Magdalene, as is generally supposed, it was followed,

6. By a life worthy of the public profession she now made.

She attended Christ in many of his journeys—was one of the noble three who stood near his cross, when his disciples had forsaken him and fled—and was with the first at the tomb, on the illustrious morn when he arose from the dead. Let us notice, then,

III. *The Public Testimony she received.*

She had honored Jesus; and he now honors her, by testifying of her.

1. He testified to her forgiveness.

He said, "Thy sins are forgiven thee:" ver. 48. Pharisee condemned her; ver. 39. Now Jesus justifies her—pronounces her pardoned.

2. He testified to her faith as the instrumental cause.

Thy faith hath saved thee;" ver 50 Faith is the eye fixed on the crucified Saviour, which brings the virtue of Christ's blood to the healing of the soul; John iii. 14, &c. Faith lays hold of the horn of salvation—runs into the refuge—trusts entirely in Christ—and accepts of God's unspeakable gift.

3. He testified to the greatness of her love.

See the parable, and the application of it, from ver. 40 to 47.

4. He testified to his approval and acceptance of her

He said to her, "Go in peace." "My peace I give unto you," &c. "Being justified, we have peace," &c. "Preaching peace by Jesus Christ." Kingdom of God, righteousness, peace, &c.

APPLICATION.

Learn, 1. The condescension of Christ. 2. The riches of his grace. 3. His power and willingness to save the chief of sinners. 4. The true way of coming to Christ. 5. The effects of true love to Him.

SKELETON XXXI.

THE CHILDREN OF LIGHT REPROVED.

"The children of this world are, in their generation, wiser than the children of light."—*Luke* xvi. 8.

THE text is part of the conclusion of the parable of the unjust steward; whose conduct is detailed at length in the preceding verses.

His conduct is held up as a specimen of that foresight and worldly prudence which so often characterizes the conduct of men in reference to the things of time. He is not commended for his unfaithfulness to his master; nor for his wicked prostitution of his substance, in laying a foundation for his own welfare; but for the care he took in making provision for his future wants. And in this, his conduct conveys a powerful reproof to the servants of God, who are seldom so intent and wise, in matters of greater value, and of eternal importance. "For the children of this world are wiser," &c. Let us,

I. *Describe the Characters specified.*

"Children of this world," and "children of light."

1. Children of this world.

Those who are truly of it—who love it—who possess its spirit—act upon its maxims—follow its vanities and fashions—unrenewed, and strangers to the grace of God—the subjects of him who is the "god of this world."

2. Children of light—

Are the regenerated sons of God, who is light, and in whom is no darkness. Those who possess the light of saving knowledge, of sanctifying grace, and the light of God's reconciled countenance. Children of light are of the day—love the light of God's law—possess the light of his Spirit—enjoy the light of peace and hope—and are heirs to the light of eternal glory.

These two classes comprise the whole human family. All men are the children of this world or the children of light, servants of God or Mammon. Let us,

II. *Illustrate the Declaration made.*

"The children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of light."

Not really and truly so. One ray of gracious light is worth more than all the riches of the world. Neither is it universally true, that they are more sagacious and foreseeing. There are exceptions to the rule in both classes. Many worldly men are indolent, imprudent, and reckless. Many pious persons are wise, diligent, steady, and zealous in the pursuit of eternal life.

But it is a general truth, that worldly men do often excel in a prudent attention to the future. As it relates to the things of this world, they are often,

1. More prudent and sagacious in laying their plans.

How they scheme, and contrive, and try various expedients, to ensure success! Very frequently how dull the children of light! Often,

2. More warm and ardent in pursuing them.

All their energies are brought to bear upon them; the soul absorbed. Children of light often listless, and cold, and formal. Often they are,

3. More diligent and indefatigable.

Rise early, and sit up late, to follow out their schemes. Allow nothing to divert them. Make ease, and pleasure, and recreation subordinate to their worldly objects. Children of light often indolent and careless. Deal with a slack hand, &c. Often

4. More self-denying and persevering.

They overcome difficulties, make any sacrifice, and toil like slaves, and persevere in their wearying pursuits, without interruption or cessation, for months and years together. All times and seasons are improved, until the object is realized. How the zeal of the children of light intermits! What declensions, and inconstancy, &c.

Let us, then,

III. *Attempt a practical Improvement of the Text.*

1. Let the children of light,

(1) Be deeply humbled. Ought they to be outstripped by those who are running for a fading crown—a wreath of withering flowers—riches that rust—pleasures of a moment's duration? Surely not! Let the fact produce prostration at the footstool of God's mercy.

(2) Be stimulated to diligence. Let them contemplate the superiority of the riches they are laboring to obtain. The riches of God's grace—are they not more suited to man's exigencies than worldly treasures? More certain and more enduring? Then let every nerve be strained; and let them agonize to obtain the crown set before them.

(3) Let them set Christ's example before them. He is the Christian's pattern. And how did he labor? Was it not his meat and drink to do his Father's will?

(4) Seek the reviving aids of the Holy Spirit. He only can quicken, support, and strengthen. With his assistance they can do all things.

2. Let the children of the world consider,

(1) How uncertain and unsatisfying is the world, which they are pursuing.

(2) How precious the soul which they are neglecting.

(3) How fearful the eternity to which they are hastening, thoughtlessly and unprepared.

Let them be truly wise, and seek the riches which will endure forever and ever.

See the case of the rich fool, and be serious, before it be too late. God now invites them to seek his face; and if they come to him truly and sincerely, through Jesus Christ, he will make them heirs of the joys of eternal life

SKELETON XXXII.

CONSOLATION IN CHRIST.

"If there be, therefore, any consolation in Christ." *Philip.* ii. 1.

CHRIST is God's grand depositary of spiritual blessings for the children of men. In him is treasured up a fulness of grace and truth. There is wisdom for the ignorant, pardon for the guilty, peace for the distracted, and salvation for the lost.

Among the rest of the blessings treasured up in him, is consolation; which ought to be pre-eminently valuable to man, who is "born to trouble, as the sparks fly upward."

We shall endeavor to show,

I. *That true and real Consolation is in Christ.*

Simeon, who was waiting for the Messiah, is said to have waited for the "consolation of Israel;" Luke ii. 25. Paul says, that our "consolation aboundeth by Christ;" 2 Cor. i. 5. And that these statements are founded in truth, will appear when we remember that consolation is associated with every thing connected with Christ.

1. His name is full of consolation.

Especially his name Jesus—the Saviour; man's only deliverer from the wrath to come. His name Christ—the anointed Son of God, the anointed Messiah of the world. Yes, his very name

> "Is music in the sinner's ears,
> 'Tis life, and health, and peace."

There is consolation,

2. In the constitution of his person.

That he is divine; therefore possessed of all dignity and virtue, and ability to save to the uttermost. That he is really human; bone of our bone, flesh of our flesh. The kinsman of the slave, having the nature of him for whom he came to atone. Capable of suffering; and his sufferings possessing infinite efficacy and value. God's only-begotten Son; and man's brother and friend. There is consolation,

3. In the work he effected.

Magnified the law; opened the gates of heaven, by the shedding of his blood; and procured all the sanctifying influences of the Holy Spirit. Died, the just for the unjust, that he might bring man to God. There is consolation

4. In the offices he bears.

He is the true Prophet, and enlightens man. He is the Priest of the Christian economy, and has offered up an eternal sacrifice for sin. He is the King of kings, and his throne shall endure forever and ever. There is consolation,

5. In the station he now occupies.

Our intercessor before God. Our advocate with the Father. By whom we treat with Deity, and have our prayers, services, and persons accepted. And by whom God descends to shed his love abroad in our hearts, and to give us grace for every time of need.

Let us then consider,

II. *For whom there is Consolation in Christ.*

1. For the convicted sinner.

He who has had his eyes opened to behold his sin and misery. Who sees his poverty, and nakedness, and danger. Christ presents himself before him as a refuge from the storm; and as a cover from the tempest which threatens him with destruction. Yes, he proclaims aloud, that "all manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men,' &c.

2. There is consolation in Christ for the contrite.

The gospel is especially presented to the broken-hearted. "Blessed are they that mourn," &c. To that man he has engaged to look, who is poor, &c. He says, Be of good cheer—only believe—thy sins are forgiven thee.

3. There is consolation for afflicted and tempted believers.

They have a sympathizing High-priest,

> "Who knows what sore temptations mean,
> For he has felt the same."

In all their affliction he is afflicted. He is ever with them; and his grace is all sufficient for them. He will hold them, and keep them to eternal life; and they shall never perish.

4. There is consolation in Christ for dying Christians.

He hath overcome death for them. Destroyed its sting. Chartered it, and employs it for the Christian's well-being. Yes, death is theirs. And because Christ lives, they shall live also. His presence irradiates the valley; and his rod and staff comfort them. They die in Jesus, and are blessed evermore.

5. There is everlasting consolation in

Christ for the spirits of the glorified in heaven. 2 Thess. ii. 16.

Yes, he gives them a mansion of glory—crowns them with eternal life—leads them in the flowery meads of paradise—gives them free access to the tree of life—and they are forever with the Lord.

APPLICATION.

Learn, 1. Where there is true consolation—in Christ. And in him, it is rich, abundant, suitable, and eternal. 2. It is in him only. Not in sin or the world. Not in Moses or the law. Not in a name or a profession. But in Christ. And he who receives a whole Christ, for all the purposes of salvation, shall receive all that consolation which is treasured up in him.

SKELETON XXXIII.

NEARNESS TO THE CROSS

"Now there stood by the cross of Jesus, his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus, therefore, saw his mother, and the disciple standing by, whom he loved, he saith unto his mother, Woman, behold thy son!"—*John* xix. 25, 26.

In this interesting and affecting narrative, let us consider, I. The Persons. II. Their Situation. And, III. The Instruction it furnishes.

I. *The Persons presented to our Notice.*

There were,

1. The three Maries.

The pious and afflicted mother of the Redeemer—his mother's sister—and the affectionate and faithful Magdalene. Peter, and the rest of the disciples, with one exception, all fled. Multitudes joining the cruel clamors of Christ's murderers. Surrounded by the soldiery, &c. Yet these noble heroines abide near his sacred person, and remain enchained by unconquerable love to the melancholy spot. Their very names are fragrant to the pious soul, and their memories will be revered forever. There was also,

2. The disciple whom Jesus loved.

That is, the beloved John. Christ loved all his disciples, but John seems ever to have had a larger share than the rest. He was one of the privileged three who were with him on the mount of transfiguration, and in the garden. It was he who leaned on Jesus' bosom at the last supper. We do not profess to assign a reason for this superiority of attachment. We may remark, however, that he was early called by the Saviour, the youngest disciple, perhaps, it is not too much to say, that he seems to have possessed most of the Spirit of Christ: and he proved by his present station, the greatness and constancy of his love to Jesus, over the rest, who had forsaken him and fled. Notice,

II. *Their Situation.*

"Near the cross of Christ."

1. Many were there out of curiosity.

To witness the execution.

2. Many there out of hatred to the illustrious Sufferer.

They had long thirsted for his life. They had maligned his reputation—falsified his character—attributed his works to demons—published him as an impostor—and now, with infernal joy, they hasten to see his death, crying aloud, "His blood be upon us, and upon our children!" "He saved others, himself he cannot save."

3. Many were there officially.

The executioners, the officers to arrange the business of death, the soldiers, &c. But the Maries, and the beloved John, were there,

(1) As his weeping friends. There to sympathize with him—there to show, that their love was unabated—their attachment as great and ardent as ever. They were there,

(2) As his public disciples. Went with him as far as it was possible for them. Were not prevented by fear, or conjectures as to the prudence of their conduct. As his soldiers, they were with him in the midst of his enemies, in the thickest part of the battle. And did not the advantages of the situation amply reward them for their love and fidelity to Jesus? They saw the Redeemer's unshaken fortitude in death; the opening of the crimson fountain for sin. They were spectators of all the prodigies which accompanied his death. The darkness—the earthquake, &c. They received his last affectionate look; heard his last words to the dying malefactor—the solemn accents, "It is finished," when he gave up the ghost. They were there,

(3) As his servants, to receive his dying commands. And he did publicly recognise them, notwithstanding the clamor of the mob, and the agony he was enduring, and laid his parting injunctions upon them. To

his mother he said, "Behold thy son"—receive him, care for him, and love him as thy companion, in the stead of him who is now leaving thee. To John he said, "Behold thy mother"—be to her an affectionate son, I commend her to thy kind attention and affectionate care, sympathize with her—heal her wounds as far as possible—remember, she is the legacy left to thee by thy dying Saviour and friend. "And he took her from that hour to his own home." Notice,

III. *The Instruction which it furnishes.*

Here we are taught,

1. The importance of filial piety.

Behold the Son of God when performing the solemn work of redemption, still feeling for his mother, and displaying to her his filial attachment, in consigning her to the care of the beloved disciple. What an address is this to young people, especially those professing godliness!

2. The weakness of human nature.

Where are all those who had heard Christ's discourses, who had received healing, and sight, and life from his blessed hand? Where is the bold and daring Peter, with his drawn sword, ready to go with him to death? "Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall." He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool.

3 The unconquerable power of love.

It was love to Jesus that led them to the cross, and nothing but love will constrain men to take up the cross, and to deny themselves, and follow Christ. Love makes us cheerfully obedient, and enables us to count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord. Cant. viii. 6 7.

4. The importance of Christian beneficence.

Jesus now commends the poor and afflicted of his people to the tender regards of his disciples, and says, "Whatsoever ye do to them, even the gift of a cup of cold water in my name, ye do it unto me."

APPLICATION.

1. Let the believer live near to the cross; and, 2. Let the sinner repair to it, and "behold the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sins of the world." 3. And let the impenitent remember that the doctrines of the cross will be to every soul of man either the savor of life unto life, or of death unto death.

SKELETON XXXIV.

LONG-SUFFERING OF GOD DESPISED

"Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness, and forbearance, and long-suffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?"—*Rom.* ii. 4.

THE goodness of God is impressed on all his works. "The earth is full of the goodness of the Lord." "He is good to all, and his tender mercies are over all his works." Forbearance is that disposition in Deity which causes him to withhold punishment when it is justly due; to restrain his wrath, when it might be righteously poured out on the heads of his enemies. Forbearance is the result of his infinite goodness — long-suffering is forbearance extended, carried out, day after day, and year after year, although the sinner is increasing in the number and enormity of his sins. Now let us contemplate,

I. *The Greatness of the Divine Long-suffering.*

This will appear if we consider,

1. The infinite dignity of the Being against whom all sin is committed.

Sin is not an evil which affects an inferior, or attacks an equal; but it is rebellion against the great Being who fills heaven and earth with his glory. If we consider,

2. That he is perfectly acquainted with every sin committed against him.

He sees the rise, progress, and result of every evil act--he sees what the sinner does, and what he would do were he not restrained or prevented. He sees every sin in its aggravations, and in its effects on others. He sees the just punishment every sin deserves. If we consider,

3. The love of purity which is essential to his character.

Every sin is full of abomination in his sight. He detests nothing but sin. His name, and attributes, and ways, and works, and government are all attacked by it; all these, therefore, are in direct opposition to it. Then consider,

4. His ability to punish.

The sinner is always within his power. He can direct a thousand arrows upon his exposed head, and open an infinite variety of channels of misery to his soul. All resources are his—heaven and earth, wind and hail, storm and tempest, dearth, and plague, and pestilence, are all his servants and are ever at hand. Then consider

5. His beneficence to the sinner.

He not only spares, forbears to punish, allows to live, but he gives him air to breathe, clothes to wear, food to eat; he gives him health and strength, comfort and enjoyment: he gives him his word, his ordinances, and his Spirit to lead him to salvation. He wills his salvation, invites him to his mercy-seat, and beseeches him to be reconciled to himself. Let us consider hen,

II. *The design of the Divine Long-suffering.*

It is intended,

1. To exhibit the riches of his grace.

He delighteth in mercy—he loves to save—and judgment is his strange work. His long-suffering is intended,

2. To lead the sinner to repentance.

It is calculated to do this as it provides the means of repentance—time and opportunity—invitation—Spirit to soften, &c., motives—promises to the repenting soul, &c.

3. It leaves the impenitent without excuse.

What can he plead in mitigation of the dread and terrible sentence of the Lord? He has had the offer and the opportunity. He has had threatenings to awe, and mercy to soften him. He has had times and seasons. God has waited long and called aloud; and now of necessity, he is speechless. Observe,

III. *God's Long-suffering is despised.*

That is, undervalued, treated lightly, neglected.

1. Infidels speak contemptuously of it.

"Where," they ask, "is the promise of his coming?"

2. The profane harden themselves under it

Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the hearts of the children of men are set in them to do wickedly.

3. The great mass of men are indifferent to it.

Do not know—do not consider. Pass on heedlessly, until even infinite mercy has exhausted her resources; and then they reap according to what they have sown.

APPLICATION.

Consider how foolish it is to despise it. Long-suffering is not indifference in God, much less approval. How wicked to despise it! it is a sin fallen angels cannot commit. How base and ungrateful, especially to sin against the boundless love of God, and the precious blood of Jesus, which was shed expressly for our salvation. How reckless it is! To dare Deity—to trifle with the soul—to be heedless of eternity. Finally, how tremendous will be its results! To perish in spite of all our mercies and opportunities; and to go down to the pit of wo, having exhausted the riches of the long-suffering of God.

SKETCH XXVI.

THE SAINTS' GLORIOUS CALLING.

"But the God of all grace, who hath called us to his eternal glory, by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered awhile, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you."—1 *Pet.* v. 10.

THE epistles addressed to the various churches, or to the Christians scattered abroad, not only contain beautiful statements and illustrations of Christian doctrine, but also the most fervent and benevolent breathings of soul for their happiness and well-being. The apostle Paul gives us several very striking and interesting instances of this; see his prayer for the believing Romans, xv. 5, 13; for the Ephesians, i. 15, and iii. 14; for the Thessalonians, i. 3, 11, &c.; ii. 3–5. The apostle Peter gives us another example in the text: "But the God of all grace," &c.

In this supplicatory address we have

I. *The Author of the Christian Calling.*

"The God of all grace."

1. The author is God.

He is the first and the last in all that relates to creation, providence, and grace. All things are of him, and by him, and for him. "The Author and Finisher of faith." The first cause and the great end of all things. Notice,

2. He is the God of all grace.

Grace signifies blessing, excellency, favor undeserved, &c. Now, he is the only fountain of blessing and happiness. Grace of every kind and degree is from him. That in which redemption originated; that which restrains the sinner; that which illuminates, convinces, and converts the soul; that which pardons, keeps, sanctifies, &c., the believer. All grace is from God; and all grace is in God, essentially, abund

antly, unchangeably eternally. All the grace or excellency which is in the creature, originally proceeds from him, so that in every sense he is "the God of all grace." Observe,

II. *The Nature of the Christian's Calling.*

"Who hath called us to his eternal glory." Observe the gradation: glory—his glory—his eternal glory. This calling is,

1. To glory.

The term signifies splendor, riches, dignity, dominion, happiness. The Christian shall be clothed with splendor; Matt. xiii. 43: possess unsearchable riches; Eph. iii. 16: be exalted to celestial dignity; Rev. i. 5: have exalted power and dominion; Psal. xlix. 14; Dan. viii. 27; Matt. xxv. 23: and have fulness of joy, and pleasures for evermore; Psal. xvi. 11.

2. To his glory.

Which he has prepared, and which he only bestows; which consists in dwelling in his presence, and in enjoying the beatific vision of himself. A ray of his own glory—a drop from the infinite ocean of his own blessedness.

3. To his eternal glory.

That which is stamped with immutable perpetuity—"pleasures for evermore." Notice,

III. *The Medium of the Christian's Calling.*

"By Christ Jesus." God's eternal glory is,

1. By the purchase of his blood.

"He hath redeemed us to God by his blood." Obtained eternal redemption for us. Eternal life is in Christ; 1 John v. 11.

2. By the revelation of his gospel.

Here it is brought to light, manifested, published, offered, &c.

3. By the communication of his Spirit.

This is the saint's earnest of it. Title imparted with it, and meetness by it. Rom. viii. 16, 17

4. By the attraction of his example.

This marks out the way, draws the soul, &c. He is the way to heaven; to obtain eternal glory we must follow him. "My sheep hear my voice, and they follow me," &c. "If any man will be my disciple let him follow me."

5. By the efficient aid of his grace.

He gives power to obey the call—to walk worthy—to overcome—and to endure to the end. "Without me ye can do nothing." "By the grace of God I am what I am." "My grace is sufficient for thee." Notice,

IV. *The Attainments necessary to the enjoyment of the Christian's Calling.*

1. Perfection.

"Make you perfect." Does not mean absolute perfection; this belongs to God alone. It means perfection of parts, of desire, of aim, and of effort. Growing up into the likeness of the perfect Saviour—receiving more of the Spirit of the perfect Jehovah—and becoming more meet for the perfection of heaven.

2. Establishment.

"Stablish you." Fix you on the right foundation. Opposite of indecision, &c.

3. Increasing strength.

Grow from the weakly babe to the stout young man. More able to perform duties, overcome difficulties, make sacrifices, &c. Stronger in faith, and hope, and love, and zeal, &c.

4. Settlement.

"Settle you." Not only establish on a right basis, and give increasing power, but make immoveably firm. Root to strike deeper. Abiding fast, and enduring to the end. Notice,

V. *That which must precede its Realization.*

"After that ye have suffered awhile." Observe,

1. Sufferings must be endured before we obtain the eternal glory.

They are necessary to conform us to our illustrious head—to make us fruitful in many of the graces of the Spirit—and to "work out for us a more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."

2. *They are limited in their duration*

"Awhile." Soon terminate. Only for a night, then eternal joy shall come in the morning.

APPLICATION.

1. Let the believer highly prize this high and heavenly calling, walk worthy of it, and daily press onwards to obtain it.

2. Let the afflicted Christian be resigned, and rejoice in tribulation, glorify God in the fires, and remember that

> "These will make our joys more sweet,
> When we to glory go."

3. Allure the sinner by the bright and glorious prospects which are held forth to all who truly repent of sin, and believe the

gospel of the Son of God. Yes, God calls them to his "eternal glory;" let them hear, obey, and live.

SKETCH XXVII.

THE SCAPE-GOAT

"And Aaron shall lay both his hands upon the head of the live goat, and confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions, in all their sins," &c.—*Lev.* xvi. 21

THE various rites and sacrifices of the law were intended to set forth in a striking form the evil of sin, and its just demerit before God; and likewise to typify the work of the Saviour, who should be the last great atoning sacrifice which God would ever deign to receive, and who should put away sin by the offering of himself. The slain goat, together with the one allowed to escape, very fully illustrated the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Let us, especially, direct our attention to the latter, as presented to us in the language of the text. Observe,

I. *The Scape-goat represented the Substitution of Christ in the Place of Sinners.*

Here, iniquities, transgressions, and sins were "put upon the head of the goat," and then the goat was dismissed, and went into the wilderness, and was no more seen. In revelation we find similar language employed in reference to Jesus; language which bears precisely the same meaning, and which is never attributed to any other than Christ. "The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all;" Isai. liii. 6–9. "He hath made him to be sin for us who knew no sin;" 2 Cor. v. 21. "Behold the Lamb of God who taketh away the sins of the world;" John i. 29; 1 Pet. ii. 24. Prophets have taught, and martyrs have died in the cause of truth, but nowhere are they said to bear our sins, or to die in our stead; this, alone, is attributed to the death and sacrifice of Christ. And if these passages do not teach the doctrine of substitution, then they are the language of mystery itself. Observe,

II. *This Substitution of Christ has made ample Satisfaction for Sin.*

Sin is fully and satisfactorily atoned for. God can now be just, and holy, and true, and the justifier of the ungodly. Every claim was met by Christ—every impediment removed—every accuser silenced—and a firm and immoveable basis of hope and mercy laid for sinners. So complete is the work of salvation by Christ Jesus, that sinners may have free access to God, come boldly to his throne, obtain mercy, and grace to help in every time of need.

III. *This Atonement by Christ extends to all Sins.*

Three words in the text:

1. Iniquities.

Some say these refer to our original depravity.

2. Transgressions.

The violations of the positive laws of God.

3. Sins.

Neglect of his holy commands. Perhaps they are used to denote that the scape-goat bore away sins of every kind and description. Sins against both tables of God's law—sins natural to fallen man—and sins of a practical and aggravated kind. Now, through the substitution of Christ, and by faith in him, "All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men." "And we are justified from all things, from which we could not be justified by the law of Moses." Sins though scarlet, or doubly dyed as crimson, &c. Observe,

IV. *That Christ, as typified by the Scape-goat, has effected Substitution for all People.*

In the case of the scape-goat, it extended to all the congregation of Israel; and respecting Christ, it is said that "He is the propitiation for the sins of the whole world;" —that he died for all men—"tasted death for every man." Ministers had better use the language of Scripture on this, as well as on every other controverted point of doctrine. Let the people have the pure words of the Holy Ghost, and let us not be anxious to inculcate mere human dogmas, and the fallible opinions of men like ourselves

Observe, then,

V. *In what way the Benefits of Christ's Substitution are received.*

In the case of the scape-goat, this is beautifully illustrated.

1. Faith is requisite.

"Hands laid on the head of the goat." Our soul's confidence withdrawn from every other object. All our trust and reliance placed on the Saviour. No hope or expectation from any other source.

"'Tis all my hope, and all my plea,
That Christ, my Lord, has died for me."

2. Sins confessed and repented of.

All these were to be confessed over the head of the scape-goat. This is necessary, that we may feel our sinfulness and deserts, and that we may feel the greatness of Christ's love in the punishment being transferred from us to the substitute; and that we may be deeply humbled and sincerely grateful for it.

3. Future life must be holy before him.

When this was done, Aaron was to wash himself with pure water, see ver. 24. Denoting that holiness and newness of life which must be the fruit of our interest in the saving grace of Christ. This is the great end of Christ's death, "That he might redeem unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works."

APPLICATION.

(1) Man's criminal and dangerous condition. Laden with iniquities and sins.

(2) The only way of avoiding the terrible results of transgression. "By Jesus Christ."

(3) The only means by which the blessings of salvation are to be received. By true repentance and faith in Jesus Christ.

(4) Let all men thus avail themselves of the redemption that is in Christ. "For this is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners."

SKETCH XXVIII.

THE CHRISTIAN STATE AND CHARACTER.

"There is, therefore, now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit."—*Rom.* viii. 1.

THIS chapter, which is full of the riches of experimental piety, commences with a clear description of the character to whom its interesting statements are applicable. This is of the utmost importance, and we ought carefully to discriminate and apply the promises of the divine word only to those to whom they are specifically and plainly made. We see the wisdom of the apostle, in carefully observing this in the instance before us. There are three things presented to us in the text.

I. The Christian's State. II The Christian's Privilege. And III The Christian's Practice.

I. *The Christian's State.*

"In Christ Jesus." This form of speech is often found in the pages of the New Testament, especially in the epistles of Paul: "If any man be in Christ," &c. "I knew a man in Christ," &c. "Who also were in Christ," &c. It signifies to be,

1. In his kingdom by a visible profession.

Christ calls his disciples out of the world, to be a distinct and separate people. They are publicly to appear as his disciples, as his witnesses. "A peculiar people," &c. They are to differ from others. "Living epistles, read and known of all men." They are to put on Christ—live to Christ, &c.—exhibit the spirit and conversation of Christ. But,

2. They are virtually united to him by saving grace.

Now this union to Christ is represented in Scripture,

(1) As resembling our union to the first Adam; 1 Cor. xv. 22, 45.

(2) As the branches to the vine; John xv. 1.

(3) As stones in a building; 1 Pet. ii. 5.

(4) As members in the body; Rom. xii 5; 1 Cor. xii. 20.

The believer is in Christ as Noah was in the ark, and as the manslayer was in the city of refuge; the one secure from the desolating flood, and the other secure from the avenger of blood. This union to Jesus may be distinguished,

(1) As a supernatural and spiritual union.

We are not naturally in Christ, but in sin—in condemnation—in death. It is the work of God, the effect of divine power and grace, that makes this important and blessed change. This union,

(2) Is mysterious. So is the union of the adorable distinctions in the Deity. Union of the divinity and humanity of Christ. Union of body and spirit in man. Paul says of the union of Christ to his church, that it is a "great mystery."

(3) Is highly honorable. Angels cannot boast of dignity like this—sons of God—heirs of God—joint-heirs with Christ.

(4) Truly enriched. "All are yours. "Begotten again to a lively hope, an inheritance incorruptible," &c. It is,

(5) The only saving union. Union to good men—to the visible church—to ordinances, &c., is desirable, is necessary, but not saving. We must be in Christ truly and virtually, by a living faith, and a real union to him. Notice, then,

II *The Christian's Privilege.*

"There is, now, no condemnation." It does not say there is no ground of condemnation, for in the highest state of Christian experience, there is a sufficiency of sinful infirmity and imperfection to condemn. Neither is it said there was no condemnation, for previously to believing, God's people were condemned, children of wrath—aliens—without God, and hope, and Christ in the world. Neither is it said there shall be no condemnation, for this will depend on their steadfastness, and continuance in well-doing unto the end. If sin is wilfully committed, there must be condemnation. But, observe, there is now, at the time of being virtually in Christ, and walking after the directions of his Spirit, no condemnation. There is no condemnation,

1. From the law.

For they are in Christ, who has magnified it, and who is "the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth." Nor,

2. From conscience.

For this is sprinkled from the evil of guilt, and is pacified by Christ's blood, and in a state of peace with God, through Jesus Christ.

3. Nor from God

For they are no longer enemies, but sons. Not far off, but brought nigh. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, keeps their hearts and minds by Christ Jesus. Then notice,

III. *The Christian's Practice.*

"Who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." The Christian's life is represented as a course of opposition to the flesh, and agreement with the Spirit.

1. It is a life of opposition to the flesh.

The flesh signifies the natural propensities of the carnal mind. This, in the believer, is crucified, put to a state of death. Does not live and reign over him. He is freed from its tyranny. He mortifies it—wages incessant war with it, &c.

2 It is a life of agreement with the Spirit.

That is, the Spirit of God, who dwells in the believer He walks,

(1) Under his direction. He is led by the Spirit.

(2) Under his influence. In praying, singing, hearing, worshipping in general. Performing duties—watching, conflicts, &c. He is sanctified by it—sealed by it—kept by it unto eternal salvation.

3. He walks exhibiting its transforming effects.

He bears the fruits of the Spirit; love, peace, gentleness, patience, &c. He is a spiritual person, and all his advances in holy things are by and through the Spirit.

APPLICATION.

Learn, True religion is,

(1) A reality; not merely a name or profession, but being in Christ Jesus.

(2) It is a blessed reality. Freed from condemnation. No longer in a state of guilt and danger.

(3) It is a holy reality. Walking after the Spirit, and not after the flesh. Let sinners learn its desirableness, and devoutly seek it, and believers rejoice in its blessed enjoyments, continue to walk before God in all unblameableness and holiness of life.

SKETCH XXIX.

THE TEMPTATION OF CHRIST

"Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness, to be tempted of the devil," &c.—*Matt.* iv 1–11

CHRIST came, not only to atone for sin, but to be a perfect example to his people It was necessary, therefore, that he should suffer temptation, that he might know how to succor the tempted. Here we have a revealed account of Christ's temptation from the prince of darkness. The whole is very minutely and fully narrated, in which we have,

I. The Time. II. The Place. III. The Agent. IV. The Temptation and Victory. And V. The Consolation. Notice,

I. *The Time of Christ's Temptation*

Three very notable and important things immediately preceded it.

1. His baptism and acknowledgment of the Father.

The whole of this splendid scene is described in Matt. iii. 13, &c. There was the act of baptism—heavens opened—Spi-

rit descending—the Father attested to the Saviour, as his beloved Son, &c. Exultation and joy of the just often go before depression and sorrow; so with Israel, who, after joyfully leaving Egypt, were followed by Pharaoh and his hosts. So David, after his anointing, was hunted as a partridge, &c. So Paul, after being taken to the third heavens, received a messenger of Satan to buffet him, &c. Christ, after his illustrious baptism, was tempted of the devil in the wilderness.

2. It was just at his entrance on the public work of the ministry.

We read of no temptation during the private part of his life. But when he arises to perform the great work of his kingdom, then the devil is too active not to oppose the laying of the foundation of that empire which was to prove the ruin of his own. Those who lay themselves out for usefulness may expect the severest assaults of the prince of darkness.

3. It was when he had fasted forty days.

The reason of Christ's fasting is not given; doubtless, he had retired into the wilderness that he might meditate and pray before he commenced his glorious work. It is worthy of remark that Moses, who was at the head of the legal, Elijah, who was at the head of the prophetical, and Jesus, who was at the head of the New Testament dispensation, all fasted forty days; Exod. xxiv. 18; 1 Kings xix. 8. Observe,

II. *The Place of Christ's Temptation.*

"The wilderness." Supposed by many to have been the wilderness of Sinai, a dreary, barren, and dangerous place. A striking emblem of the fallen state of the world, which he came to redeem. A just representation of that through which Zion's pilgrims have to pass, in their way to the promised land. Notice,

III. *The Agent who tempted Christ.*

"The devil." The leader of the apostate angels—the murderer of our first parents—the seducer of mankind—the prince of darkness—the god of this world—he whose nature is opposed to all that is good, and true, and holy, and whose work it is to go about seeking whom he may devour. He is distinguished for subtlety and craft, for power, for dire malignity, and deep wickedness. Notice,

IV. *The Temptation itself, and the Victory obtained.*

It was presented in three different forms. He was tempted,

1. To distrust the Father's care and goodness.

"If thou be the Son of God, command these stones to be made bread." Christ referred to Deut. viii. 3, "Man doth not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." God can preserve in dearth and famine, when the staff of bread is broken. His will is sufficient for every purpose. By his simple word he effects whatever he pleaseth. He was then tempted,

2. To rash presumption.

Christ is conducted, most probably, to the top of Solomon's porch, which was 150 feet high, and which overhung a valley of 700 feet; and he now suggests, that if Christ was the Son of God, he might cast himself down, seeing it is written that "God shall give his angels charge concerning him, lest at any time he dash his foot against a stone." Now, let it be observed, that Satan misquoted the passage for it is said, "to keep thee in all thy ways;" Psalm xci. 11. Not out of the way of providence or duty, a most important part of the subject. Then Satan grossly perverted the passage; for the promise was not given to foster recklessness and presumption, but to encourage those who humbly trusted in the Lord, and made the Lord their fortress and refuge; Psalm xci. 1, 2. Christ repelled this suggestion by another quotation from the word of life, "It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God." To rush into danger, is to tempt God; and to do this, is to violate the divine prohibition. He tempted Christ,

3. To gross and wicked idolatry.

Takes him to the most elevated part of one of the mountains in the vicinity of the desert, and shows him, most probably, the various provinces of Judea, and offers him these, with all their glory, if he would fall down and worship him. Observe the monstrousness of the suggestion—for the Son of God to worship the devil! The utter wickedness and vileness of it! Then the arrogant and base offer, to give these kingdoms when he had no right in them, no claim to them, and therefore could not have the least ability to bestow any part of them. Christ draws his last arrow from the holy quiver of God's word, and at once overcomes the foul spirit: "Get thee hence

Satan." I know thee, and thy wiles and malevolent designs, too well. "It is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve;" and thus triumphed over the adversary, for he immediately left him. Let it be noticed how the Son of God honored the divine word, and made it the instrument by which he quenched all the fiery darts of the devil. Notice, then,

V. *The Consolation which Christ received.*

"Behold, angels came and ministered unto him." Angels had, doubtless, witnessed the scene, and had hailed the triumph of the Son of God, and they now became ministers of comfort to him. How relieved would be the mind of Jesus when he found himself surrounded by those holy intelligences who had kept their first estate, the holy servants of his heavenly Father, and who ever worshipped before him, in his holy temple! Let this encourage the saints of the Most High; they have a heavenly guard, they are in a state of happy union and friendship with angels, for they are all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation; Heb. i. 14.

APPLICATION.

Christ's temptation is intended to teach us,

1. The true character of our great High Priest, "Tempted in all points as we are."

2. The true way of overcoming the enemy, by the power of the word of truth.

3. The success which we shall assuredly obtain in the faithful use of the divine armory. And,

4. The consolation God will communicate to all his faithful and constant servants. Moreover, we learn, that it is not sinful to be tempted. Satan cannot compel, only suggest; and the grace of God is sufficient for his people.

SKETCH XXX

THE RAINBOW

"And there was a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald."—*Rev.* iv. 3

In this chapter is presented to our notice the splendid vision of heaven with which John was favored. He is permitted to view the throne of God, and to have an imperfect vision of the great and august Being who sat upon it. He is favored with a view, also, of the splendor which surrounded his throne, which is expressed in the text, "And there was a rainbow," &c. After this, he beheld the four-and-twenty seats upon which the elders were sitting, with their golden crowns and white garments. He saw, also, the four beasts round about the throne, and heard their hallowed ascriptions of purity and praise; for day and night they worship God, saying, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, who was, and is, and is to come." He then heard the universal chorus of praise proceeding from the four-and-twenty elders, who fell down before the throne, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying, "Thou art worthy," &c. The whole of this is very glorious and striking, and deeply interesting to the expectant of heavenly felicity; but our remarks must be confined to the appearance of the throne. "And there was a rainbow," &c.

I. *Let us view the Nature and Scriptural History of the Rainbow.*

The rainbow is presented to our notice,

1. In connection with the covenant God made with Noah.

After the deluge, God gave a gracious promise to Noah, that he would never again bring a flood of waters upon the earth; Gen. ix. 8. To the rainbow he referred as the sign or token of the covenant thus made. There can be no doubt but that the rainbow had been seen from the beginning, and was not, as some have thought, created for this occasion, as it is the natural effect of the rays of the sun, falling on drops of rain in a cloud, and by the refraction and reflection of those rays. God was pleased, therefore, to select it as the token of that promise which he had given to Noah, as the representative of mankind to the end of the world. There are several striking reasons for the appointment of the rainbow as the sign of this covenant. We mention two:

(1) The rainbow is only seen when the fears of men might justly be excited as to another flood. No doubt that the descendants of Noah, for many generations, would have greatly feared, whenever they beheld the black clouds stretching themselves across the heavens, in gloomy and portentous aspect. And it is only when these

clouds appear that the rainbow is seen. How appropriate, then, that at these seasons the bow should be the recognised symbol of peace and promise!

(2) The rainbow can never appear but when there is sunshine as well as rain. So that the darkened cloud is rendered quite unalarming, when the rays of the sun fall upon it, and produce the bow. Besides, so long as the rainbow is beheld, a deluge is naturally impossible.

2. The rainbow is connected with the most splendid representations of the divine glory.

There are three instances of this in the holy word. The first as seen by Ezekiel, chap. i. ver. 28. Here is an evident reference to Jehovah, as governing all things in the person of his Son, who is spoken of in ver. 26, as having the appearance of a man; and it is in and through Christ that Jehovah treats with mankind, and by whom he directeth and upholdeth all things both in heaven and earth. The second instance is in the text, where Deity, high, and lifted up on his holy throne, and surrounded by the worshipping hosts, as encircled "with a rainbow, in sight like unto an emerald." This, evidently, intimates the gracious connection subsisting between God and man; and that, however elevated and glorious he may be, yet his grandeur and majesty are made to act in blessed concert with the arrangements of grace. The last representation of the rainbow is in the 10th chapter of this book, ver. 1, where we are taught, however Jehovah may step forth arrayed in garments of terror, or however black the dispensations of his providence may appear, that yet his head is ever adorned with the rainbow of grace, and that, as such, he will be ever recognised by all those who love and put their trust in him; that, while he is the destroyer of his impenitent enemies, he is the unchanging friend and consolation of his people. Let us, then,

II. *Consider the Rainbow as a striking Symbol of God's gracious Regards to our fallen World.*

Observe,

1. The rainbow is turned up towards heaven, is unstrung, and without arrows.

And here we perceive that God is in a state of reconciliation with our world. Our sins had justly incurred his displeasure; he might, therefore, have appeared as a man of war, with his bow strung, and his quiver full of arrows of vengeance, ready to pierce the hearts of his enemies But, that this might not be the case his Son stood forth and requested that the bow might be turned towards himself, that its arrows might all lodge within his own heart; and that, when the quiver was exhausted, it might appear to man in its present form, harmless and unstrung. God is at peace with us, through the blood-shedding of Christ, and he can now be the just God, and yet the Saviour

2. In the rainbow is exhibited the union of the seven prismatic colors.

Red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo, and violet. Now this appears beautifully to set forth the harmony of the divine perfections in the economy of grace. When God proclaimed himself to Moses, he exhibited himself in this glorious seven-fold character. Lord God, Jehovah Almighty —merciful, gracious, long-suffering, abundant in goodness and truth, yet inflexibly just; Exod. xxxiv. 6. Now, all these are exhibited in harmonious operation in the redemption of man, and were all combined in the person and work of Christ. Behold his miraculous power—his mercy to the miserable—his grace to the unworthy—his long-suffering to his enemies—his goodness to all—his truth in all his doctrines—and his justice in giving his own life promptly and freely, as he had engaged for the salvation of our world. Yes,

> "Here the whole Deity is known,
> Nor dares the creature guess
> Which of the glories brightest shone,
> The justice or the grace."

3. The rainbow appears to reach the heavens.

And thus it shows us the heavenly origin of all the blessings of grace. In heaven the plan was formed—from thence the Saviour came—gospel is glad tidings from heaven—the Spirit descends from heaven; so likewise, pardon, and grace, and holiness—every grace and benefit—every good and perfect gift, &c.

4. The rainbow appears to unite heaven and earth together.

This is truly effected in redemption "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself." Angels sang this o'er the plains of Bethlehem. "Glory to God," &c.

5. The rainbow in the text is said to be about the throne of God.

This indicates that all his attributes and perfections are under its influence. It binds all together. All his laws, and ways and works are under its benign influences; in short, the throne of God is the throne of grace, of covenanted mercy, and reconciliation, and good-will towards us. Hence, the apostle, "Let us come boldly," &c. There is, indeed, enough to overwhelm us, to startle us, to keep us at a distance, viz., the majesty, glory, and purity connected with it; but there is one grand source of encouragement even to the vile and guilty sinner, that there is "a rainbow round about the throne," &c.

6. The rainbow round about the throne is represented as like unto an emerald.

The meaning is, that the beautiful green color of the emerald was the chief and leading appearance it presented. Intending to teach us the freshness and perpetuity of the blessings of God's grace. Though thousands of years have rolled round since the New Testament dispensation was determined upon and contrived, yet it is still green and flourishing as ever —it never changes or decays; it is an "everlasting covenant; ordered in all things, and sure." And the Author of salvation has inscribed upon him, "The same yesterday, to-day, and forever." The riches of God's grace are ever full, unchanging, and eternal.

APPLICATION.

1. Let the sinner be allured by the graciousness of the divine character. How can such goodness fail to lead the sinner to repentance?

2. Let the serious inquirer be encouraged to draw near to the throne. And,

3. Let the believer rejoice in the riches and unchangeableness of God's grace.

SKETCH XXXI.

CHOICE OF MOSES.

"By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God," &c.—*Heb.* xi. 24–26.

In this passage we have presented to us a very astonishing instance of self-denial and devotedness to God. It is, indeed, a striking evidence of the power of faith and is well calculated both to instruct and profit the contemplative mind. Notice,

I. His Renunciation. II. His Choice. And, III. The Principle by which he was influenced. Notice,

I. *His Renunciation.*

His renunciation respected those things which have ever been held in the highest estimation by the world. He renounced,

1. The honors of a prince.

"Refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter." Few things more attractive than honor. What sacrifices men make to obtain it! Ease, time, health and even life, are daily hazarded for it. Princely honor is the summit of human ambition. Yet the dignities of an Egyptian prince had no attractions for Moses, and he freely and cheerfully laid them aside. He renounced,

2. The pleasures of a court.

And courts generally abound with them. Whatever can gratify the senses, or pander the imagination, may be expected here. Eastern palaces and courts are generally scenes of all that is luxurious, and gross and dissipated. Hence, they are styled in the text, "pleasures of sin." They originate in sin, are fostered by sin, and invariably tend to the increase of sin. He renounced,

3. The riches of a kingdom.

And that kingdom was Egypt; so greatly famed for its grandeur and treasures, and which for many ages was the most distinguished nation on earth. Yet the treasures of this wealthy empire found no place in the heart of Moses. And mark, in reference to his renouncement of the honors, and pleasures, and riches of Egypt that it took place,

(1) At the period of maturity. When he was quite capable of judging and rightly estimating them. It was after he had spent a considerable portion of his time in the midst of them. When they might have been expected to have presented the greatest attraction. And he renounced them,

(2) When he was quite capable of enjoying them. Not in the decline of life when he had outlived them; but at the period of manhood, when he had come to years; when sense, and nature, and carnal reason, would all have concurred in his adoption of them. Notice then,

II. *His Choice.*

He made choice,

1. Of the people of God as his associates.

These he preferred to princes, and rulers, and statesmen—these, to the great, and noble, and rich of Pharaoh's court. His choice may appear absurd to the eye of sense, yet it commends itself to the eye of faith. God's people,

(1) Are the wisest companions. Though not in literary attainments, yet in true wisdom, in saving knowledge. The wisdom they possess is heavenly in its origin, saving in its influence, and invaluable in its price; Job xxviii. 12–19.

(2) They are the most honorable companions. They are all the children of a king.

(3) The most safe companions; Prov. iii. 23, &c.

(4) They are the most useful companions. "He that walketh with wise men shall be wise." Their conversation, their example, their influence, will prove beneficial to us. And observe, also,

(5) They shall be our companions forever. He made choice,

2. Of the afflictions of God's people.

Though they were groaning beneath a despot's cruel yoke, yet he preferred being one of them, and suffering with them, to all the splendid advantages of the Egyptian court. God's people are an afflicted people, and it is through much tribulation that they enter the kingdom. He made choice,

3. Of the reproach of Christ.

The people of God, as the seed of Abraham, were the expectants of the Messiah; and they were the worshippers of the true God, and, therefore, they were despised on account of their religion. Their expectation of Christ exposed them to constant reproach. Thus we perceive, he chose for his companions slaves instead of princes; and for his portion, afflictions and reproach, in preference to the pleasures and riches of Egypt. Notice,

III. *The Principle by which he was influenced.*

"By faith" he did all this. By credence to the promise of God. By believing implicitly what had been revealed to the patriarchs. By this he learned,

1. Rightly to estimate the things of this world.

He was aware, with respect to honors pleasures, and riches, that they were.

(1) Unsatisfying in their nature.

(2) Uncertain in their possession.

(3) Evanescent in their duration; and often,

(4) Evil in their influence. By faith, therefore, he esteemed them not. Then his faith had particular reference,

2. To the recompense of reward—

Which God has so graciously and richly promised to his people. This, though future, was certain—though spiritual, was real. In its nature suitable—in its character, great and abundant—and in its duration, eternal. He preferred the soul to the body—God to the world—and eternity to time.

APPLICATION.

The world is divided into two classes. The votaries of honors, pleasures, and riches; and those who are renouncing these, and, by faith, having respect to a future recompense of reward. The possession of love to both is impossible. Let the preciousness of the soul, the riches of heaven, and the joys of eternity decide your choice.

SKELETON XXXV.

THE CHURCH CHRIST'S BRIDE.

"Come hither, I will show thee the bride, the Lamb's wife."—*Rev.* xxi. 9.

THE union of Christ to the church is frequently represented in the divine word under the figure of a marriage; and the taking of Eve from the side of Adam, and presenting her to him as his future companion and wife, seems beautifully typical of Christ enduring the sleep of death, that he might purchase to himself "a peculiar people, zealous of good works." This idea is found both in the Old and New Testament Scriptures; Isaiah refers to it, liv. 5; and lxii. 45; Jer. iii. 14. The blessed Redeemer frequently introduced it. Parable of the marriage of a king's son. The parable of the ten virgins. Also John iii 29. The apostle Paul also adopts it, 2 Cor. xi. 2. We have this fully expressed in the second verse of the chapter, as well as in the text.

Let us observe three things, I. The Bridegroom. II. The Bride. And, III. The Marriage Consummation.

I. *The Bridegroom*—

Is Christ, in the text styled "the Lamb." This title is given to Jesus by the prophet Isaiah, chap. liii. 7; by the Baptist John, chap. i. 29; by Peter, 1 Epist. i. 19; and twenty-six times in the book of the Revelation. It is a name expressive of his innocency and meekness; and is especially designed to remind us of his substitution as the sacrifice for human guilt, for he is our paschal Lamb sacrificed for us. By he bridegroom being represented as the Lamb, we are reminded of two important facts,

1. Of the nature it was necessary Christ should assume to become the bridegroom of the church.

It was indispensable that he should partake of the same nature. Deity could not possibly stand in any other relationship than that of Creator, Governor, and Judge. Christ, therefore, became a real and true man, had a body of flesh and blood, a reasonable soul also, and thus was a perfect man, made "in all points like unto us, yet without sin." The other fact of which we are reminded by Christ being called a Lamb, is,

2. That as a Lamb he was slain for the purchase of his church.

See Acts xx. 28, "The church of God purchased with his own blood;" see also, Heb. xiii. 12, "That he might sanctify the people with his own blood." Hence the song of the redeemed in heaven, "Unto him that loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood." Rev. i. 5. "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain," &c. Rev. v. 9–12; vii. 14. Then, observe three things in the bridegroom,

(1) His original riches and glory. Son of God—Heir of heaven—the Prince of life—Lord of all.

(2) His unparalleled love to man. Love of Christ passeth knowledge. Eternal and unbounded love. Loved us more than he loved the ease, the riches, and the joys of glory—more than he loved his own life.

(3) The greatness of his claims upon our gratitude and love. We ought to "love him, because he first loved us." Yes,

"Love so amazing, so divine,
Demands our hearts, our lives, our all."

Let us then notice,

II. *The Bride.*

"The bride is the church;" the associated body of believers. We referred in the introduction to several passages where this is specified. Now, there are several things which exhibit the beauty and appropriateness of the metaphor. There is,

1. The abandonment of their original connections and condition.

Those who constitute the church, were originally "far off"—aliens and strangers—enemies to God—without Christ and without hope, and without any love to or desire after Christ. But when the mind becomes enlightened, then sin and folly are forsaken, Christ's voice is heard, and all things are left to follow him.

2. The spiritual union of the church to Christ.

Believers are joined to Christ, and they who are joined to the Lord have one spirit. "New creatures in Christ Jesus." They are of one mind with Christ—possess his spirit, and are partakers of the Divine nature.

3. There is the possession of the name of Christ.

As his bride, the church bears his name; all their former titles and distinctions are annihilated. No longer enemies, but friends—no longer sinners, but saints—slaves, but freemen—not now unbelievers, but the humble disciples and followers of the Lamb.

4. There is the investiture of the church into all the riches and honors of Christ.

As his bride, she not only bears his name, but becomes associated with Christ in all his dignity and treasures. "Joint heirs with Christ." "All are yours, whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present or things to come," &c. 1 Cor. iii. 22.

Observe,

III. *The Marriage Consummation.*

"The Bride, the Lamb's wife."

1. The church in this world is espoused to Christ.

"His bride." This, among the Jews and among many other nations, was considered an important preparatory arrangement. There is considered to be between the parties, agreement—affection—and a desire for perpetual union. Now, on earth all God's people thus stand related to Christ. There is mutual agreement, love and desire for everlasting union.

2 The grand performance of the nuptial ceremony is reserved for Christ's second coming.

Until then, the church will not be complete. One grand design of Christ's second advent, will be to receive "his bride," that "where he is, his people may be also," and forever, see ver. 2. Then will the church be raised to participate of Christ's uninterrupted presence, and to be glorified with him with that "glory which he had with the Father before the world was." Then shall be the marriage shout, "Behold, the Bridegroom cometh." Then shall the festival be prepared—the heavenly banquet, "And there shall be no more curse," &c. Rev. xxii. 2, &c.

APPLICATION.

Let the church, (1) Rejoice in her exalted privileges and glorious prospects. (2) Walk worthy of her high vocation, and exhibit the praises of him who hath called her out of darkness into marvellous light. (3) Invite sinners to be reconciled to Christ, and to come to him that they may have life. (4) At the marriage of Christ with his church, his enemies will be punished with destruction from his presence, and the glory of his power. 2 Thess. i. 7–9.

SKELETON XXXVI.

THE CARNAL AND SPIRITUAL MIND CONTRASTED.

"For to be carnally-minded is death, but to be spiritually-minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be."—*Rom.* viii. 6, 7

LET us consider,

I. *The Carnal Mind, its Fruit and Tendency.*

By carnal, is meant fleshly, that which is unrenewed. The result of that depravity which has been transmitted from the first fallen man to all posterity; and this carnal mind is the opposite of the mind as it came originally from the hands of God, when he made man in uprightness. This contrariety will appear, if you consider the natural condition of,

1. The carnal mind

Once intelligent, now ignorant—once holy, now impure—once happy now miserable—once bearing the image of the heavenly, now the image of the earthly Notice,

2. The fruits of the carnal mind.

"Enmity against God, not subject to the law of God." It signifies opposition to God—aversion and dislike to God. This aversion and dislike applies,

(1) To the law of God. "Not subject to the law of God." Disobedient—rebellious. "Who is the Lord," &c.

(2) To the ordinances of God, to his services—to his day—to hearing his word—prayer—praise, &c.

(3) To his people. Do not love them, because they are not of them. "The world hateth you."

(4) To the Spirit of God. Quench his holy emotions—grieve him—do despite to him, &c. This enmity, in short, refers to all that is like God, or of him, and from him. And it is a total enmity, a universal enmity, a constant enmity. Then, observe,

3. The tendency of the carnal mind.

"To be carnally-minded is death." There is present spiritual death. "Dead in trespasses and sins." The sentence of death, "Condemned already." Exposure to eternal death. "Wages of sin, death." Let us consider,

II. *The Spiritual Mind, its Fruit and Tendency.*

"To be spiritually-minded is life and peace." Notice,

1. The nature and signs of a spiritual mind.

It is the opposite of the carnal mind. Mind renewed by the Spirit—"born of the Spirit"—possessing the influences and witness of the Spirit—led by the Spirit—delighting in spiritual things, and pursuing spiritual objects.

2. The fruit of the spiritual mind.

"Life and peace." Spiritual life. "You hath he quickened," &c. Life of acceptance with God. "Justified freely." Life of faith in Christ, and to Christ—life of holy obedience—life of hope—title to eternal life—PEACE, not now opposed to God—enmity slain—reconciled to God. Peace with God—peace with conscience—and peace with all men. In a state of agreement with God, and all that is of and from God. Notice,

3. The tendency of the spiritual mind.

Everlasting life. Spiritual life perpetuated and consummated in heaven.

APPLICATION.

Learn, (1) Man's natural depraved state and danger. (2) The necessity of regeneration. Nothing will repair or amend it. It must be made entirely new. (3) The happiness and safety of the children of God.

SKELETON XXXVII.

THE INQUIRING GREEKS

"Sir, we would see Jesus."—*John* xii. 21.

THE text was the language of certain Gentile proselytes, who had come up to worship at the feast of Jerusalem; and who came to Philip, and said, "Sir, we would see Jesus." Let us consider,

I. *What this Desire implies.*

It implies,

1. Some knowledge of Christ already.

They had heard of him, his name was familiar to them. They had some idea of his pretensions to the Messiahship, &c. It implied,

2. An ardent longing that this knowledge might be increased.

What they knew was insufficient for experimental and practical purposes. Might be very limited, and in many things erroneous. Correct view of Christ of the greatest importance. We should know him in his titles—in his offices—and in his work. We should know him personally—savingly, &c. It included,

3. The employment of proper means to increase this knowledge.

They came to Philip, inquired, &c. So we are called upon to "hearken to Jesus," to "come to him," to "behold him." We have his word where he is revealed—his ordinances where he is exhibited—his gospel where he is published. Notice,

II. *The Reasons on which this Desire may be grounded.*

1. On account of what may be seen in Christ.

There is to be seen in Christ what is not to be seen elsewhere. In Christ is to be seen,

(1) The brightest display of the Divine glory. "We behold his glory, the glory of the only-begotten of the Father," &c.

> "The first archangel never saw
> So much of God before."

Glory of God exhibited in the works of nature and providence, but in Christ it is concentrated. Fulness of the Godhead dwelt in him bodily. There is to be seen in Christ,

(2) The clearest manifestation of the Divine perfections. In him were exhibited—boundless knowledge—almighty power—exuberant goodness—unsullied purity—and infinite mercy. In Christ is to be seen,

(3) The only mediator between God and man. The sinner's days-man, standing between the culprit and the offended Deity, with his hands upon them both. Only way to the Father. The true ladder, reaching from earth to heaven. In Christ is to be seen,

(4) The depositary of all spiritual blessings. In him "all fulness dwells." "Full of grace and truth." Pardon for the guilty—peace for the unhappy—purity for the defiled—salvation for the lost, and eternal life for all who believe. This desire to see Christ may be grounded,

2. On the advantages arising from a believing sight of him.

A believing sight of Jesus,

(1) Enlightens the mind. "He is the true light," and believers become the children of light, walking in the light, &c. It,

(2) Cheers and comforts the heart. "Then were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord." See instances, Andrew, Simon, Philip, &c. John i. 40. Woman of Samaria; John iv. 28. It,

(3) Transforms the soul. "But we all with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image," &c.; 2 Cor. iii. 18. Let us,

III. *Specify some Circumstance when this Desire is particularly seasonable.*

1. When the soul is burdened with a sense of guilt.

No other name that can charm—no other voice that can speak peace—no other who possesses healing virtue, &c. Moses not desired—prophets of no avail—apostles cannot suffice. The language of the heavy-laden heart is, "Sir, I would see Jesus."

2. In the day of trouble and affliction.

He sympathizes—his presence supports—his grace is sufficient.

3. In the means of grace.

What is the word without Christ? Prayer or praise without him? What is baptism or the supper, without Jesus is there?

4. In the hour of dissolution.

His rod and staff only can comfort. He guides through the valley. When friends avail not—when flesh decays and heart fails—"he is the strength of our heart, and portion forever." Stephen; Acts vii. 55. And the view of faith in the dying Christian, shall immediately be followed by the full and open vision of the Redeemer in his kingdom, where they shall be like him, for they shall see him as he is.

APPLICATION.

(1) Invite the sinner to "behold the Lamb of God." (2) Urge the inquiring mourner to look unto him and be saved. Brazen serpent. (3) Let the believers look unto Jesus, "the author and finisher of our faith," &c. Make him the model of their obedience, and the object of their supreme adoration and love.

SKELETON XXXVIII.

INABILITY OF THE LAW TO SAVE THE SINNER.

"For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin condemned sin in the flesh; that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit."—*Rom.* viii. 3, 4

THE text presents to us a condensed view of the plan of redemption. An outline of that glorious scheme by which salvation was effected for our fallen world. Notice,

I. *The Inefficiency of the Law expressed.*

"For what the law could not do," &c. By the law in the text is evidently meant the moral law, but it also includes every other; viz. the Adamic, and the ceremonial. The inefficiency of the law relates to man's restoration. The law has no ability to save the transgressor; all that the law can do is to be a rule of life, approve of the perfectly obedient, and bind over the transgressor to receive the infliction of the just penalty denounced. It cannot accept of imperfect obedience; it cannot wink at iniquity; it cannot accept repentance; it canno mitigate any of its claims More especially,

1. It cannot pardon the guilty.

And man requires this, or he must perish forever. Its inexorable verdict, "The soul that sinneth shall die."

2. It could not remove the impurity of the soul.

The law is totally unacquainted with any remedy for the depravity which transgression has produced. It is very strikingly personified in the priest and the Levite who passed by on the other side.

3. It could not restore man from his alienated state by adoption.

No: rather having expelled the delinquent from the peaceful retreats of Eden, it placed at the entrance "cherubim, and a flaming sword, to keep the way of the tree of life."

4. It could not prevent the full infliction of the full penalty.

There is no disposition in the law to prevent it. It delivers the debtor to the officer, and consigns him to prison, from which it possesses neither will nor ability to release him, till he has paid the uttermost farthing. Now, this inability is said to arise from the "weakness of the flesh." That is, the fallen depraved state of man It was able to do all it was designed, viz., to approve and reward the obedient; but when it became weak by transgression, it ceased to possess any ability to promote his well-being. Notice,

II. *The Glorious Expedient which God adopted.*

What the law could not do, God, by sending his own Son, hath done. Here we have,

1. The Author of this expedient.

God. The Creator of the world, the Ruler of the universe, is the source of redemption. From him it emanated. He pitied—devised the scheme—and brought salvation. "God so loved," &c. Herein is love," &c. Notice,

2. The blessed Agent employed.

"His own Son." Not in the same sense that believers are sons, or as the angels are called sons; but in a more especial and dignified sense. His "only son"—his "only-begotten Son." Though Son, ye co-eternal with the Father—equal in power authority, and glory. Heir of the world "Lord of all." "God over all, blessed for evermore." Notice,

3. The commission of this Agent.

God sending his own Son. Does not imply real inferiority in the person sent, only official subordination. Much less does it suppose unwillingness on the part of the agent; no, he freely offered himself. He delighted to come to do the will of God. "His delights were with the children of men." He came freely and cheerfully of his own love and grace. Notice,

4. The form he assumed.

"Likeness of sinful flesh." Became really and truly a man, dwelt in a tabernacle of flesh. "Made of a woman." "God manifest in the flesh." Thus became the kinsman of those he came to redeem—capable of suffering, &c. Though flesh, yet "not sinful," only "likeness of sinful flesh." See Heb. vi. 26; Luke i. 34, &c.

5. The work he was sent to effect.

To "condemn sin in the flesh." His holy conception condemned original sin. His spotless life condemned practical iniquity—his discourses condemned it—his sufferings and death especially condemned it. Thus, the law was exalted—penalty due to sin paid—laver of regeneration provided—means of adoption obtained—title for eternal life procured. Consider,

III. *The Grand Design which God contemplated in sending his Son.*

"That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." That believers in God's own Son,

1. Might be justified and considered righteous.

All who believe in him, are justified from all things, &c.

2. That they might be made truly righteous.

"Blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin," &c. "He is made unto his people sanctification."

3. That they might be distinguished for works of righteousness.

Called to these; and by the quickening and strengthening aids of the Spirit, "they perfect holiness in the fear of the Lord;" Cor. vii. 1. The true evidence of their ceptance and sanctification is, "They walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit."

APPLICATION

(1) How great the goodness of God to our fallen world! (2) How invaluably precious and important the work of Christ (3) How necessary faith and obedience to the law of the Spirit.

SKETCH XXXII.

TRANSFIGURATION OF CHRIST.

PART I.

"And after six days, Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John, and bringeth them up into a high mountain apart, and was transfigured before them," &c —*Matt.* xvii. 1–8.

It appears from the preceding chapter that, a few days previously, Jesus had been conversing very intimately with his disciples, as to the opinion men formed of his person and character; and that he had also desired a public and frank avowal of their own sentiments concerning him. Peter on this occasion made that glorious confession which called forth the public approval and honor of Christ, and which was associated with that distinguished promise, "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." It seems that, a little while afterwards he made known unto them the events connected with his sufferings and death; and that Peter, who had previously made so good a confession, expressed himself with unbecoming freedom and rashness, and said, "Be it far from thee, Lord, this shall not be unto thee;" which drew forth that severe reproof, "Get thee behind me, Satan, for thou art an offence unto me," &c. The term Satan signifies adversary, and referred to Peter's adverse state of mind respecting the doctrine of his sufferings and death. Jesus then began to discourse upon the necessity of all who would be his disciples taking up the cross, and, if necessary, being willing to abandon life itself for his sake. "Now after six days had transpired, Jesus took Peter, James, and John," &c. Observe,

I. *The Witnesses of Christ's Transfiguration.*

"Peter, James, and John."

1. Peter.

He was distinguished for his zeal and earnestness, as well as for the noble confession he had just made He was des-

tined to possess an elevated position among Christ's apostles. He was to be the first who should make known the gospel of the kingdom, both among Jews and Gentiles, after Christ's resurrection.

2. James.

He was the first apostle who should seal the doctrines of the gospel with his blood.

3. John.

He was Christ's beloved disciple, his youngest follower, and his bosom friend.

The sight of the transfigured Saviour was well calculated to establish Peter in his elevated views of Christ's glory, and at the same time to reconcile him to the doctrine of his death. It was, likewise, every way adapted to encourage James to follow Christ, even to death, that he might partake of his glory. And in this way John was more fully qualified to be the defender of Christ's divinity and glory. In reference to these witnesses it may be remarked, that they only were Christ's attendants when he raised the daughter of Jairus; and who witnessed the Saviour's agony in the garden of Gethsemane; Mark v. 37; Matt. xxvi. 37. As to the number, three, it may be observed, that more would have tended to disturb the hallowed scene, and three were sufficient to attest to that glory which was exhibited before them.

Notice,

II. *The place selected for Christ's Transfiguration.*

"Bringeth them up into a high mountain apart." Most generally admitted to have been Mount Tabor. It is deserving of remark,

1. That mountains have often been selected as places of divine manifestation and glory.

It was on Mount Moriah that Abraham was called to offer up his son Isaac; it was on Mount Horeb that God appeared to Moses in the burning bush; it was on Mount Sinai that God descended when he gave the law; it was on Mount Pisgah that Moses beheld the promised land, and on Mount Nebo that God took him to himself; on Mount Ebal Joshua built an altar to the Lord, and wrote upon stones the law of Moses; it was on Mount Carmel that Elijah challenged and destroyed the prophets of Baal; on Mount Zion he temple was erected.

2. Christ often selected mountains as the scenes of his labors and devotions His own blessed and heavenly [illegible] he delivered on a mountain; Matt. v. 1. He often retired to meditate and pray on a mountain; Luke vi. 12. He was crucified on Mount Calvary, and from Mount Olivet he ascended to glory.

3. A mountain was a place highly favorable for the exhibition of Christ's transfigured glory.

For its privacy and retiredness from the busy scenes of the world; not liable to interruption. Its elevation above the surrounding country being emblematical of Christ's purity and dignity, and also typical of Christ's ascent up to Calvary's summit, and his final reception into heaven from the Mount of Olives. Notice,

III. *The Season of Christ's Transfiguration.*

"After six days," that is, the succeeding evening, for there can be no doubt that it took place during the stillness and darkness of night. This would favor their separation from the other disciples and the people, and render the glory more striking and magnificent. It was often during the night that God manifested himself of old to the prophets; it was during night that Abraham was called to sacrifice his son, and that Jacob wrestled with the angel of the covenant; it was during night that Job had that vision which produced such striking effects upon him; and the blessed Redeemer often spent whole nights in fervent prayer to God. Then, notice,

IV. *The devotional Exercise in which Christ was engaged when he was transfigured.*

Luke particularly specifies, that as "he prayed, the fashion of his countenance was altered;" Luke ix. 29. And it is also stated, that he took "James, and Peter, and John, and went up to a mountain to pray" This was his leading errand, his chief object. It is worthy of note, that Christ hallowed most of his engagements with prayer. Not that he needed it as a Divine person, for as such, he was heir of all things. But as our Mediator, and the example of his church, it became him to present a perfect pattern before them, that they might tread in his steps. Prayer was one of the leading features in his holy career. When he was baptized he prayed, and thus sanctified the water of baptism; Luke iii. 21. When he was tempted he prayed, and thus sanctified temptation

Matt. iv. 1, &c., when he wrought many of his miracles he prayed, and thus sanctified miraculous gifts. When his soul was in an agony in the garden, he prayed, and sanctified affliction. When he was suspended on the cross, and was dying by cruel and murderous hands, he prayed, and thus sanctified persecution and death. When he ascended to his glory, while his sacred hands were lifted up over his disciples, he was parted from them, and a cloud received him out of their sight. And, now, in the holiest place of all, "He ever liveth to make intercession for us."

APPLICATION.

We learn from this part of the subject,

1. The importance of retirement, meditation, and prayer.

2. The advantages arising from being Christ's disciples—such have fellowship with him, and behold his glory.

SKETCH XXXIII.

TRANSFIGURATION OF CHRIST

PART II

"And after six days, Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John, and bringeth them up into a high mountain," &c.—*Matt.* xvii. 1–8.

In the previous sketch we have noticed, The Witnesses—The Place—The Season—and The Devotional Exercise, connected with Christ's Transfiguration. Let us notice, now,

V. *The Transfiguration itself.*

"And was transfigured before them." The changed or transfigured appearance of the Son of God is represented as consisting,

1. In the glory of his person.

His nature was precisely the same, and is so in heaven; yet this nature appeared in a glorified form. The Divinity from within threw out upon it a holy splendor; hence, John doubtless referred to it, when he said, "We beheld his glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of his Father, full of grace and truth;" John i. 14.

2. In the splendor of his countenance.

"And his face did shine as the sun." The face of Moses shone so that the people could not look upon him, and he conversed with them with his countenance covered with a veil. But the resplendent rays that distinguished the face of Moses were borrowed, the effect of converse with Deity. But Christ's, like the sun's, were underived; he had within himself all power and glory. Two or three passages will throw light on the splendor of the Redeemer's countenance. See Paul's account, Acts xxvi. 13. Also description of the celestial temple, where the light of the sun is dispensed with, "for the Lamb is the light thereof;" Rev. xxi. 23. See also Rev. x. 1. And this is one of those instances of conformity to Christ, which saints shall experience; Matt. xiii. 4–8.

3. In the brightness of his garments.

Which, says Matthew, were "white as light." Mark says, "exceeding white as snow." This indicated his unsullied nature, his unspotted purity. His apparel was not emblematical of terror and war but of innocency and peace. When Daniel beheld him as the Ancient of Days, "his garment was white as snow;" Dan. vii 9. When John saw him, "his head and hairs were white as wool;" Rev. i. 14. He also, represents him as being on a "white horse;" Rev. xix. 11. Also, on a "white throne;" Rev. xx. 11. And Christ has promised that those who overcome shall be clothed in "white raiment;" Rev iii. 5.

Notice,

VI. *The Attendants at Christ's Transfiguration.*

"And behold there appeared unto them Moses and Elias." Luke adds, "who appeared in glory." Observe,

1. That the attendants were men, and not angels.

There was a peculiar propriety in the selection of men on this occasion.

(1) Men are more intimately related to Christ. "He took not on him the nature of angels, but he took on him the seed of Abraham." And it was human, and not angelic nature that was transfigured.

(2) The sight of angels would not have yielded such consolation to the apostles, as the appearance of human beings in a state of glory.

(3) The appearance of these in glory would present both an argument, and furnish an illustration of that glorious change which should pass upon the bodies of the redeemed at the last day. Notice,

2. The attendants were Moses and Elias.

(1) Moses. He had been dead about fifteen hundred years. Most probably was now raised from the dead. Moses was the first penman employed to write the volume of revelation—he was the deliverer of the Jews from bondage—he was the lawgiver under the legal economy—he was a prophet, and an eminent type of Christ; now, he appeared to lay down all his authority at Christ's feet—to testify to his Messiahship—to give him homage as the world's great Prophet, and man's Redeemer.

(2) Elias. He had been translated about nine hundred years. He was at the head of the prophetical dispensation—and as Moses represented the law, so he represented the prophets. Moses and Elias had both been distinguished for eminent piety, zeal, and usefulness. Both had fasted forty days, and both were signal instruments in the hands of the Lord. In their appearance, we have the law and prophets doing homage to Jesus, and honoring him of "whom Moses in the law and the prophets did write." Nothing could be better calculated to establish the faith of the disciples, than the appearance of these illustrious persons on this occasion. Notice,

3. Moses and Elias appeared in glory.

And the lustre must have been very great, to be distinguished when Christ's transfigured glory was so very refulgent. We do not learn in what way the disciples knew them. We may observe from this, however, that in heaven there will be a distinct recognition among the celestial inhabitants, for, if the opposite is supposed, then, amid the crowded ranks of heaven would only be seen one vast collection of uninteresting faces.

VII. *The Conversation connected with Christ's Transfiguration.*

"Moses and Elias talking with him." Had revelation been silent, there would have been boundless room for conjecture as to the topics of their conversation. But Luke says, chap. ix. 31, "And spake of his decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem." Now, here are several things to be carefully observed.

1. A peculiar description of Christ's death.

"His decease." The word is not the one generally employed to denote death, but signifies departure. Supposed by many to refer to the scape-goat, which received by imputation the sins of the people, and then departed into the wilderness; by others, to the exodus, or departure of the Israelites from Egypt. And as the paschal lamb was the ordinance connected with that deliverance, so the death of Jesus was the procuring cause of the eternal deliverance of his people. The word very beautifully accords with Christ's own description; for in reference to his death, he says, "I go away" from you, but, if I go away, I will come again," &c. Death is a decease or departure, and not, as the French infidels said, "a putting out of existence." It is still existence in another world and state.

2 They spake of his accomplishing his decease.

Here, Christ's death is not represented as a passive act which he endured, but an active one which he accomplished. This reminds us of two important facts.

(1) Christ had power over his spirit. No one could wrest it from him. He could lay down his life, and take it up at pleasure. He had life in himself.

(2) As our atoning sacrifice, it was requisite that his offering should be voluntary, that he should "give his life a ransom for sinners." And hence, he cried, "It is finished, and he gave up the ghost."

3. His decease was to be accomplished at Jerusalem.

Now, it may be remarked, that it was on Mount Moriah, where the temple was erected, that Isaac was typically offered near nineteen hundred years before—it was here that the sacrifices were offered, which so significantly shadowed forth the person and work of Christ. Besides, it was here that Zechariah had prophesied, that "a fountain should be opened for sin and uncleanness;" and here, too, were the priests and councils, and rulers, who were to try and condemn him. The apostle refers to it distinctly, Heb. xiii. 11, 12. Now, when it is said that Moses and Elias spake of his decease, we may suppose that they spake,

(1) Of the necessity of it. To realize types—to fulfil prophecies—to save the world. That they spake,

(2) Of its merit and preciousness, in laying a solid basis for the restoration of man. That they spake,

(3) Of its influence, in spoiling the

powers of Satan—unstinging death, and destroying the grave—and opening the gates of immortality and eternal life. That they spake,

(4) Of the rewards Jesus should receive. In "the travail of his soul"—in the eternal approbation of his Father—and the praises and honors of the redeemed forever. They spake of his decease as the most important subject to man—the most interesting to Christ—and the most glorious to God.

APPLICATION.

Learn,

1. The glorious condition of departed saints, as seen in the appearance of Moses and Elias.

2. The importance of Christ's death. The only visit we read Moses and Elias ever paid our world, since their removal, was to converse with Christ as to "his decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem."

SKETCH XXXIV

TRANSFIGURATION OF CHRIST.

PART III.

"And after six days, Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John," &c.—*Matt.* xvii. 1–8

IN the preceding sketches we have noticed, The Witnesses—The Place—The Season—The Devotional Exercise—and, The Transfiguration itself. Also, The Attendants—and, The Conversation connected with it. We now proceed to consider,

VIII. *The expressed Rapture of Peter, and the Proposal he made.*

"Peter said, Master, it is good to be here; let us make three tabernacles; one for thee, one for Moses, and one for Elias; not knowing what he spake." Notice,

1. His present rapture.

"Master, it is good to be here."

Observe his reverential address, "Master;" and then, his exclamation, "It is good to be here." We do not wonder, when we reflect upon,

(1) The company they were with. Moses, Elijah, and Christ.

(2) Their appearance on this occasion. "In glory." Clothed in raiment bright and shining.

(3) The conversation which took place, respecting the world's redemption by Christ Jesus.

(4) Their situation. On a high mountain, secluded from the noise and bustle of the world.

(5) Their exemption from all trouble and attacks of foes. The sneer of the Pharisees, and the revilings of the world. It is good to be on the mountain—to pray—to be with Christ—to have fellowship with saints—behold Christ's glory. Yes

> "Our willing souls would stay
> In such a frame as this;
> And sit and sing themselves away
> To everlasting bliss."

Observe,

2. His earnest proposal.

"Let us build three tabernacles," &c. Here we have his expressed desire to perpetuate his happiness. Now, there are several things in the proposal to be commended.

(1) He only wanted to raise temporary dwellings; not stable or permanent ones.

(2) He wanted them to be on the mount of meditation; not in the world, who were living without God.

(3) He wanted them for Christ and his people. Communion with the head and the members; both desirable, and both necessary. And,

(4) He submitted it to Christ's supreme wisdom and authority. "If thou wilt." If it seem good in thy sight. If thou wilt give thy sanction to it. Observe,

3. The impropriety of Peter's proposal.

Luke adds: "Not knowing what he said." Observe,

(1) Peter's proposal was the result of feeling, and not of judgment. Religion must be formed of both. Without the one, it will be fanaticism; without the other, formality.

(2) Peter wanted heaven here, forgetting that we must travel to it—fight for it. Strangers and pilgrims.

(3) Peter overlooked his brethren, whom they had left when Christ ascended the mountain: therefore it was selfish.

(4) Peter lost sight of the great company of the redeemed. Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, the prophets, &c.

(5) Peter surely forgot, that a kingdom was prepared above; and therefore, dwellings here were unnecessary.

(6) Peter need not require three tabernacles. Jesus will be present, with Moses

and Elias; he as the head, and they, and all saints, as his illustrious attendants. Glorified saints do not want to be excluded from each other, much less from Christ

(7) Besides, was it reasonable for Moses, the favored servant of the Lord, whose soul had been extracted by the lips of the Almighty, and who had been before the throne for fifteen hundred years, o descend to dwell on a barren mountain? For Elijah, who had been taken to glory in a chariot of fire, to dwell in an earthly tabernacle again?

(8) Finally, he forgot the subject of conversation. That Christ should accomplish his decease at Jerusalem: that he had to die for man; and by his agonies and death to redeem the world. The eternal interests of men would have been blighted forever, had Peter's proposal been accepted. But "he knew not what he said." Consider,

IX. *The Symbol of the Divine Presence which was now displayed.*

While Peter yet spake, "behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them."

God frequently manifested himself through the medium of a cloud. In his essence, he is invisible. "Dwells in light which no man can approach unto." When his presence was with Israel, it was a pillar of cloud by day, and a pillar of fire by night. When he gave the law on Sinai, he descended in a cloud; Exod. xix. 16. When he descended into the tabernacle and temple, a cloud was the symbol of his presence; Exod. xl. 34; 1 Kings viii. 10. But on this occasion, the cloud was a bright one; denoting the graciousness and clearness of the Christian dispensation over that of the legal and ceremonial one.

Observe,

X. *The Public Attestation of Christ's Character and Mission.*

"And, behold, a voice out of the cloud, which said: This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him." This was the voice of Jehovah: and it attested,

1. The dignity of his person.

"God's Son." Not a son in like manner with angels, or saints; but his 'only-begotten" Son: possessing the express image of the Divine Person: co-equal and co-eternal with the Father. "Heir of all things." 'Lord of all.' "God over all." The voice attested,

2. The Father's approbation and deligh in him.

"My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Between the Father and the Son there was perfect oneness, both of perfections and will. The Father ever delighted in the Son; and the Son ever delighted in the Father. See Isaiah xlii 1. God was especially well pleased in Christ's mediatorial undertaking—in the purity of his human nature—in the benevolence of his miracles—in his perfect obedience, &c.—in his offering—resurrection—ascension—intercession, &c. As a proof that he is well pleased in him, he has exalted him to his own right hand; given him a name above every name, &c.; Heb i. 1, &c.

3. The voice enjoined supreme attention to Christ.

"Hear ye him." No longer Moses; but the great Prophet of whom Moses was a type. No longer Elijah, or the prophets; but him to whom bare all the prophets witness. "Hear ye him;" at all times—on all subjects—on all occasions; as to doctrines—as to worship—as to experience—as to practice—as to promises—as to time—and as to eternity, "hear ye him." Notice,

XI. *The Effect produced upon the Disciples.*

"They fell on their face, and were sore afraid."

The scene was too grand and sublime for weakly human nature. Shows our present imperfect state; and the change we must undergo, before we can even endure the blaze of eternal day.

Then notice,

XII. *Their gracious Recovery by Christ, and the Injunction which he laid upon them*

"And Jesus came and touched them. and said, Arise, and be not afraid," &c.

How graciously and easily did Christ restore them! And with what tenderness he said, "Be not afraid." All the splendor was now removed; the cloud, the attendants had returned; and Jesus now appeared as before his transfiguration. He charged them "to tell the vision to no man, until the Son of man be risen again from the dead." As he had to pass through the scenes of his abasement and humiliation, it was necessary to reserve this scene until, by his resurrection, he had proved himself the Son of God with power.

APPLICATION.

Christ's transfiguration,

(1) Clearly proved both the soul's immortality, and the resurrection of the dead.

(2) Gave a splendid representation of the condition of saints in a future state.

(3) Showed the harmony of all the dispensations of religion God had established; that of the law—prophets—and Christ.

(4) The superior dignity and glory of the latter.

(5) Was calculated, also, to encourage Christ, as giving him an earnest of that feeling and glory which would arise to him from the execution of his mediatorial work.

SKETCH XXXV

THE BURNING BUSH.

"And the Angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush," &c.—*Exod.* iii. 2–6.

THE life of Moses was divided into three distinct and equal periods. Forty years he dwelt in the court of Pharaoh; forty, as a shepherd in the desert; and forty years did he go before the children of Israel, as their leader to the promised land. Our text relates to his history at the end of the second period, when Jehovah appeared unto him, and called him to go forth to Pharaoh and demand the liberation of his people. The burning bush was a striking emblem of God's suffering church.

Let us, I. Illustrate the Resemblance subsisting between them. And then, II. Attempt a useful Improvement of it.

Let us, then,

I. *Illustrate the Resemblance between the Burning Bush and the Church of God.*

The parallel will hold,

1. In reference to the humble and lowly appearance of the church.

The metaphor is not that of the lofty cedar or the majestic oak; but a mere thorny bush, a sort of contemptible bramble. Now, the church of God has generally presented to the eye of the world a lowly and contemptible appearance. At this time the church was in bondage in Egypt; in a state of degradation and slavery. Look at the Christian church during the days of the Redeemer on earth. Principally composed of publicans, tax-gatherers, and fishermen. Even yet, not many rich, or great, or noble are called. The reason may be: because we cannot be Christ's disciples, and love riches; and it is difficult, if riches increase, not to set our hearts upon them. We cannot love and pursue the fashions of the world, and seek the honors of men, and be true members of Christ's spiritual church. The church has got no pompous services—no priests arrayed in gorgeous robes—no earthly splendor to attract; but she is formed of faithful souls, who dwell in the depths of self-abasement, and who put on the lowly garments of humility. Notice,

2. The elevation of the church.

The bush was seen by Moses on Mount Horeb. Though the church is humble in herself, yet she is elevated before men, and her basis is the Rock of Ages. Jesus has beautifully described this: "Ye are the lights of the world." "A city set on a hill, that cannot be hid." The erection of the temple on Zion strikingly sets forth the true elevation of the church. Hence, Isaiah says: "The mountain of the Lord's house shall be established on the top of the mountains." "And in this mountain the Lord of Hosts will make a feast for all people." Isai. ii. 2; xxv. 6.

Observe,

3. The situation of the church.

The burning bush was beheld in the desert or wilderness. The church is in the world; which is very aptly likened to the wilderness. And ancient Israel, passing through the wilderness to the land of promise, is an exact emblem of the church in her progress to the heavenly state. The world is fitly represented as a wilderness, on account of its sterility and barrenness, dangers, storms, &c. The prophets often described the church as being in a wilderness state. Isaiah says: "In the wilderness shall waters break out," &c.; Isai xli. 19. Ezek. xxxiv. 25; Hosea ii. 14 Cant. iii. 6.

4. The condition of the church.

"And behold, the bush burned with fire." The bush appeared to be enveloped in flames. This was intended to represent the suffering condition of Israel in Egypt. It equally applies to the church in all ages. The condition of the church is that of suffering. Sufferings are forcibly represented by fire on two accounts:

(1) On account of their severity. And,
(2) On account of their purifying influence.

Now, this suffering condition applies to God's church in all ages. Abel, from Cain; Noah, from the antediluvians; Israelites, in Egypt—again, in the wilderness, in Babylon, &c. New Testament edition of the church: apostolic age; a series of them during the first four centuries: then by Mahommed; then by Antichrist; Germany, France, Britain; see Heb. xi. 32 to end.

Now, these sufferings of the church,

(1) Keep her separate from the world; make her sons and daughters tried ones; separate the chaff from the wheat; 1 Pet. 7.

(2) They conform the church to her suffering Head. Captain of our salvation was made perfect by sufferings. "In the world ye shall have tribulation." See Pet. iv. 12-14; Phil. iii. 10. Notice,

5. The preservation and perpetuity of the church.

"And the bush was not consumed." God's church has increased in the fire, and has been perpetuated in spite of the devouring flame. And this is truly wonderful! Men of all ranks and countries have combined against her. All nations have conspired to overthrow her. The kings of the earth have covenanted to raise her. And yet, she lives and triumphs! Her enemies have been sepulchred one after another. Pharaoh and his host sank like lead in the mighty waters—the Canaanitish kings were destroyed—Amalek was blotted out of existence—Belshazzar was slain—Herod was eaten up of worms. The very cities and empires over which they reigned have disappeared. And the church of God still grows, and is daily multiplied. Blood of the martyrs was the seed of the church. Observe,

6. The divine presence in the church.

"God called unto him out of the midst of the bush." Now, in this the preservation of the church of God is accounted for. 'God is in the midst of her; therefore, she is not moved."

(1) He is in the midst of her, to strengthen her for her conflicts.

(2) To comfort and sustain her in them.

(3) To bring her safely through them.

(4) To ward off the strokes of her foes, and to overrule them for her real good.

It is God's presence that preserves the church. It was so with Daniel in the den, the three worthies in the fire. And this is his own promise; Isai. xliii. 2. See, also, xii. 6; Zeph. iii. 14; Zech. ii. 5. Son of Man was seen in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks; so, also, he was seen as a lamb, in the midst of the throne. Notice,

7. The sanctity of the church.

"The place whereon thou standes is holy ground." Not, literally, more than any other ground; but because of the presence of the Lord. So, Christ's church is sanctified.

"A holy nation." "A peculiar people, zealous of good works." Holy services—holy privileges—holy joys, &c. Eph. ii 19. Notice,

8. The preparation God demands of all those who seek fellowship with him and his people.

"Put off thy shoes from off thy feet Here it is implied,

(1) That we must become separated from all sinful pursuits.

(2) That we must cultivate reverential feelings towards Him.

(3) That we must approach him with deep humility and filial fear. And,

(4) That we do not come to Him in our own strength and righteousness; but in that mediatorial way which he hath appointed. Notice,

9. The encouragement he gives to his church.

"I am the God of Abraham," &c. As such, he is faithful and true—merciful and long-suffering—abundant in goodness and compassion. As he was with them, and guided, and blessed, and protected; so he will be with, guide, bless, and protect his church throughout all ages.

Let us,

II. *Attempt an Improvement of this Subject.*

1. Let the enemies of the church cease so reckless and foolish an attack.

2. Let the people of God trust implicitly in the Lord, who is in the midst of them, and fear not.

3. Let them cultivate that spirit of reverence, holiness, and humility, which will secure the divine approbation and blessing. And,

4. Let sinners with contrition seek "the good-will of him who dwelt in the bush

SKELETON XXXIX.

THE CONNECTION BETWEEN RELIGION AND PROSPERITY

"As long as he sought the Lord, God made him to prosper."—2 *Chron.* xxvi. 5.

THE text is associated with the history of Uzziah, king of Judah, who ascended the throne when he was sixteen years of age. Distinguished for his piety and uprightness of conduct, &c., the text records the result of his piety, "As long as he sought the Lord," &c. Let us notice,

I. *What is included in seeking the Lord.*

1. An acknowledgment of his being and perfections.

He that cometh to God, must believe that he is, &c. Proper views of his character and attributes. Scriptural knowledge of God. "Know thou the God of thy fathers," &c.

2. Ardent solicitude for the enjoyment of his favor.

Conscious of sin, unworthiness, &c. Anxious to know and feel his love—to be at peace with him. This solicitude will be accompanied by repentance and believing prayer.

3. A reference to him in all our ways.

"Commit thy way to the Lord," &c. "In all thy ways acknowledge him," &c. "Set the Lord always before me," &c. It includes,

4. Entire dependence upon him, and constant prayer for his blessing.

"Trust in the Lord," &c. "Be careful for nothing," &c. "If your parents being evil," &c. Notice,

II. *The Prosperity God gives to those who seek him.*

1. Sometimes great temporal prosperity.

Jacob, Joseph, Job, Solomon, Uzziah.

2. In reference to temporal things, always real prosperity.

That which is really and truly best both for the body and soul, for this world and that which is to come. Contentment and satisfaction.

3. He will not fail to give spiritual prosperity.

Growth in grace—enlargement of heart—increasing conformity to himself—meetness for glory, &c.

4. He will assuredly bestow eternal prosperity.

The crown of life—the white robe, the celestial mansion—the unfading inheritance, &c. Observe,

III. *The Connection between seeking the Lord and Prosperity.*

"As long as he sought the Lord," &c. There is a connection,

1. As between promise and fulfilment

This is clearly exhibited in the following passages. "Your souls shall live that seek the Lord." "Blessed are they who seek the Lord with their whole heart." "They that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing."

2. There is a moral connection.

Seeking the Lord brings us nearer to him—assimilates us to his likeness—expands the mind—enlarges the heart—improves the graces—and produces true spiritual happiness.

3. There is a connection as to continuance.

As long. No longer; it is not promised any longer, cannot enjoy it any longer, ought not to expect it any longer. "If any man draw back," &c. See Saul, king of Israel. Read David's charge to Solomon. Then the lamentable case in the text. "But when he was strong his heart was lifted up, to his destruction," &c.; ver. 16. Smitten with leprosy, and so he lived and died, ver. 19 to end.

APPLICATION.

1. Have right views of prosperity. What will stand every test, and trial, and season. What includes body and soul, time and eternity. 2. True way of obtaining it. To seek it of the Lord. "His blessing maketh rich and addeth no sorrow thereunto." 3. Retain it by cleaving to the Lord; Heb. iii. 11, and iv. 1.

SKELETON XL.

PETER'S DENIAL OF CHRIST.

"And when they had kindled a fire in the midst of the hall, and were sat down together, Peter sat down among them," &c.—*Luke* xxii. 55–60.

IN this affecting narrative we have a striking representation of the weakness of human nature, and a powerful admonition to all the followers of Jesus, to "watch and pray, lest they enter into temptation." Let us notice,

I. *The Ingredients of which Peter's sin was composed.*

We observe in Peter's sin,

1. Unfaithfulness.

He professed to be Christ's disciple and witness; yet when an opportunity occurred of testifying of him and for him, he was silent. He professed to be Christ's friend; yet when Jesus stood in special need of his sympathy, he ceased to acknowledge him, or to be seen with him. In Peter's sin there was,

2. Falsehood.

He said that "he knew him not." And this falsehood was repeated again and again, and every time with increased virulence of feeling, and violence of manner. In Peter's sin there were,

3. Perjury and imprecation.

He confirmed his falsehood with oaths. Gave the most solemn form of speech to what was untrue, called Jehovah to witness to a lie, and also imprecated God's curse upon himself if he knew any thing of the man; Matt. xxvi. 74. Let us consider,

II. *The Aggravations and Extenuations of Peter's sin.*

1. The aggravations of Peter's sin.

It was aggravated,

(1) By Peter's intimate relationship to Christ. He was one of Christ's most intimate disciples had been highly favored and distinguished by Christ, together with James and John, above the rest. Had been with Christ on the holy mountains—had seen his miracles—walked with him on the sea, &c. It was aggravated,

(2) By Peter's noble profession of Christ. When Jesus inquired of his disciples, 'Whom do ye say that I am?" Peter replied, "Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God!"

(3) By the warning Christ had given him. He had recently avowed his readiness to go with him to death, and although all men forsook him, he would not. Christ then gave him an explicit and faithful warning, see Matt. xxvi. 31, 35.

It was aggravated,

(4) By the company before whom he denied him. He was not before the rulers or judges called upon to give evidence at the hazard of his life. But it was in the presence of a few servants, at the interrogation of a simple girl, a servant maid, 'who, looking upon him, said, This man was also with him." It was aggravated,

(5) By the circumstances and time when he denied him. It was when Christ was in the hands of his violent adversaries when Christ was heavily laden with anguish and sorrow; after he had arisen from the excruciating agonies of the bloody sweat in Gethsemane, and when the hour had arrived that he should lay down his life for the world. Let us notice,

2. The extenuations of Peter's sin.

(1) It was sudden, and not premeditated. It had not been deceitfully and deliberately planned. A few hours before his resolutions and designs were of the most opposite character.

(2) It was of short continuance. He did not remain in his sin, did not continue to sink deeper in crime, and wander further from the path of duty. When the surprise of the temptation was over, he felt his criminality, and fled from the path of error. Mark, moreover,

(3) It was never repeated. It was one act of unfaithfulness, and was never rendered more enormous by repetition. Let us,

III. *Ascertain the leading Causes of Peter's sin.*

1. Presumption and self-confidence.

He evidently gave himself credit for more courage and strength than what he possessed. He was certain, whoever else might fail, that he would go with him to prison and to death. He displayed this, too, when he drew his sword in the garden.

2. Inattention and watchfulness.

Christ's caution seems to have been entirely in vain. With the warning ringing in his ears, he fulfils the crime predicted, and against which he was cautioned. The beacon was erected, but he closed his eyes, and split upon the rock it pointed out.

3. Neglect of prayer.

Christ had urged this exercise upon them (ver. 40) in the same discourse, in which he had warned Peter, but we have no evidence that he regarded it. Doubtless he imagined that he had strength enough, until he found that he had none.

4. Direct imprudence.

He unnecessarily mixed with the enemies of Christ, sat among them, heard their conversation, &c., when he ought either to have been close by the side of his Lord, or in solitude, shedding tears of

sympathy for his suffering Friend. He evidently placed himself on Satan's ground, and gave him a direct opportunity of gaining an advantage over him. The last cause evidently was,

5. The fear of man.

He durst not encounter the wrath of those who hated Jesus and his cause. He feared those who could kill the body; and this fear so completely unmanned him, that he deserted, and disowned his knowledge of and connection with Christ.

APPLICATION.

1. Learn the weakness of man in his best estate. 2. Man's ignorance of his own infirmities. 3. The necessity of watchfulness, and entire dependence on Christ. 4. Our duty to those who may be overtaken in a fault, &c. Gal. vi. 1.

SKELETON XLI.

BIRTH OF MOSES.

ADDRESSED TO PARENTS.

"Take this child away, and nurse it for me, and I will give thee thy wages."—*Exod.* ii. 9

NOTICE the eventful period of the birth of Moses. Pharaoh's cruel edict. Amram and Jochebed, the parents of Moses, conceal his birth. Necessitated to remove him. Ark prepared—committed with its precious treasure to the waters of the Nile. Miriam, his sister, appointed to watch over it. Pharaoh's daughter visits the river. Sees the ark. Has it brought to her. Babe weeps. Her heart melts, and she resolves to save it. Miriam offers to introduce a Hebrew nurse. The offer is accepted, and his mother receives him back, with the address of the text, "Take this child," &c. Let us consider the text as addressed to all parents. Notice,

I. The Duty enjoined, and II. The Reward promised.

I. *The Duty enjoined.*

"Take this child away, and nurse it for me." Notice,

1. The object.

"This child." A human being in a state of entire weakness and dependence. What we once were. Consider,

(1) What it may become. Perhaps a philosopher, warrior, statesman, philanthropist, minister of truth.

(2) What it must become. A responsible moral agent, heir of immortality, eternally saved or lost. Observe,

2. The duty itself.

"Nurse it for me." It includes,

(1) Attention to the physical wants—food, clothes, health, comfort, &c. It includes,

(2) Cultivation of the mental faculties. Improvement of the intellectual powers by education. But it especially includes,

(3) The religious instruction of the soul. It does not imply that parents can change the hearts of their children; this is God's prerogative; he does not demand this from them: but he requires them to use the means, to sow the seed, to "train them up in the way they should go." This they can effect,

1. By the communication of Scriptural knowledge.—Knowledge of human nature—evil of sin—accountability to God—redemption by Jesus Christ—doctrines of repentance, holiness, future rewards and punishments.

2. By the employment of moral discipline.—Restraining sin. Exercising parental authority; without this, a family is like a field without a fence, like an asylum of maniacs, house without a roof, army without discipline

3. By placing before them a consistent example.—Walking before them wisely. Alluring by a practical exhibition of religion. Children greatly influenced by what they see. Gives power and efficiency to instruction.

4. By taking them to the house of God.—Do this early. Behold the child Samuel ministering before the Lord; 1 Sam. ii. 11. How beautiful! how affecting!

5. By constantly praying with and for them.—This will engage the influence of heaven on their behalf, and is the way to procure the aid of the Holy Spirit, who alone can make all the other means successful. Abraham prayed thus for Ishmael, and Jacob for Joseph's sons; Gen. xvii. 18; xlviii. 16. Let us consider, then,

II. *The Reward promised.*

"And I will pay thee thy wages." You may be rewarded,

1. By seeing your efforts crowned with success.

Children like olive-plants around your tables. Polished stones, &c. See them rise up to call God blessed; to fill useful places in society and in the church. Thousands have been thus rewarded; there are failures, but these are the exceptions, not the rule itself.

2. You shall at any rate possess the consciousness of the divine favor.

The Christian parent who trains up his children to piety, shall always have the smile of Deity, and be free from the bitter tortures of conscience, attendant upon a neglect of these duties.

3. You shall leave your children with composure when you come to die.

If you have succeeded, they shall step into your offices in the church, and carry on that blessed cause which is so dear to your hearts. The separation, too, shall be but for a moment, and the reunion in glory shall be uninterrupted and everlasting. If you have failed, still you will die in peace: you have employed the means, and after your decease, God may make them efficient; if not, his will be done!

4. You shall stand before them with confidence in the judgment-day.

Not be afraid to see them. Clear of their blood. Your faithful discharge of the parental duties fully known to the omniscient Being who shall be seated on the dread tribunal. He will now honor, confess, and reward you.

APPLICATION

1. Let pious parents be encouraged in the way of duty. 2. Let negligent parents consider the cruelty of their conduct, and the bitter consequences which must result from it.

SKELETON XLII.

GOD KNOCKING AT THE SINNER'S HEART.

"Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." —*Rev.* iii. 20

The text was originally addressed to the church at Laodicea; but is capable of a more general application. Let us consider it as the address of Jehovah to all who are favored with the light of revelation and yet remain strangers to salvation.

Notice,

I. *The State of Soul supposed.*

Closed against God.

This is an obvious and lamentable truth. He is not in all the thoughts of the wicked. They live without God, and without hope in the world. Several things keep the soul closed against God.

1. Ignorance.

They do not know God; nor their need of his divine favor. "Souls perish for lack of knowledge." Minds darkened by the God of this world. Hosea iv. 6.

2. Reigning sin.

Soul fully possessed. Satan sits on the throne. His captives; servants of sin. Hence, God cannot dwell there so long as this state of things abides. Light no fellowship with darkness; sin, with holiness &c.; Rom. vi. 17.

3. Love of the world.

Temporal things absorb all the desires of the mind. Visible apparent good, preferred to that which is invisible and eternal. Worldly honor, worldly riches, worldly pleasure, preferred to the honors, and riches, and pleasures which come from God. Jas. iv. 4; 1 John ii. 15.

4. Inconsideration.

Do not reflect on these things; do not deliberate on consequences; do not ponder over it as the most momentous matter that can engage their attention. "Israel doth not know; my people do not consider;" Deut. xxxii. 29; Hag. i. 5; Isai. i. 3.

5. Unbelief.

The statements of revelation are not believed. Hence, threatenings do not alarm; invitations do not allure, promises do not attract; and the gospel produces no saving effect on the heart. Unbelief effectually closes the soul against God. "He could not do many mighty works there, because of their unbelief;" Heb. iii. 19; Mark vi. 6.

Notice,

II. *Jehovah's Address to the Soul thus closed against him.*

"Behold, I stand at the door, and knock."

Consider three things:

1. The blessed Being from whom the address proceeds.

"Behold, I." The high and lofty One who inhabiteth eternity; heaven his throne —earth his footstool—universe his temple

—ncets of heaven his attendants. Self-existent independent, ever blessed; yet he stoops to solicit the possession of the sinner's heart. Well may heaven and earth be called to behold an act of such condescension and grace.

2. His attitude.

"He stands at the door."

(1) Denoting his patience and long-suffering. While his enemies are enthroned within, the blessed God stands without.

(2) His readiness to depart. Can easily pass on; easily withdraw himself, and leave the soul to infatuation and ruin.

3. The action he performs.

"Behold, I stand at the door, and *knock*." He does this,

(1) By his daily bounties; the necessaries and enjoyments of life. Psalm ciii. 2.

(2) By the gracious offers of his gospel. Pardon, peace, and eternal life proclaimed, &c.

(3) By the suggestions of his Spirit. His Spirit convinces men of sin, strives, &c. John xvi. 8.

(4) By the events of his providence. These events abound in the world, and sometimes visit our families and persons with afflictions, bereavements, &c. Hosea v. 15.

Notice,

III. *The conditional Promise given.*

"If any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in, and sup with him, and he with me." Observe,

1. The conditions.

(1) "Hear my voice;" so as to understand it, consider it, believe it. And,

(2) "Open the door." Freely, cheerfully, and with all his heart, give me a welcome into his soul, in my own way, and on my own terms, and to effect my own purposes, &c.

2. The promise.

"I will come in," &c. To illuminate the mind—convince the heart—regenerate the soul—to cause all old things to pass away, and to make all things new. "And sup with him, and he with me." Mutual fellowship and communion here; and eternal and uninterrupted enjoyment in the world to come.

APPLICATION.

Learn, (1) God's gracious regards to the children of men. He desires their happiness and salvation. (2) The sinner's responsibility. Life and death before him; God waits to save; his eternal well-being or wo depends on his acceptance or rejection of the offers of mercy. (3) The inevitable consequences of impenitence. God offended—salvation rejected—soul lost.

SKELETON XLIII

THE DEMONIAC.

"Then they went out to see what was done; and came to Jesus, and found the man, out of whom the devils were departed, sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed, and in his right mind."—*Luke* viii. 35.

Christ Jesus came into the world to accomplish a threefold object. He came to glorify his heavenly Father—to save sinners—and to destroy the works of the devil. These three are inseparably connected. It is by destroying the works of the devil, that souls are saved, and God glorified. During his ministry, Christ made several attacks on the empire of Satan. He did so in the case of the child he delivered, Mark ix. 17, Mary Magdalene, and the instance in the text.

Observe, I. His Miserable Condition II. His Restoration And, III. The Effects Produced.

I. *His miserable Condition.*

See from ver. 27.

1. He was possessed with devils.

Under the complete influence of malignant spirits. Satan seems to have had very great and general influence about the time of Christ's appearance on earth. "But this is your hour, and the power of darkness;" Luke xxii. 53. Here we see an emblem of the misery of the sinner. Satan's slaves. He rules in the hearts of the children of disobedience, &c.

2. He dwelt among the tombs.

Deserted the habitations of the living, and wandered among the sepulchres of the dead. Sinner said to "sit in darkness, and shadow of death;" Luke i. 79. The unrenewed soul, far from the favor and enjoyment of the living God.

3. He was mentally deranged.

Did not act as a rational being. When he was restored, it is said, he was in his "right mind;" therefore, not so before Sin is insanity—the essence of folly—the veries madness—perversion of the judg

ment—prostitution of all the faculties of the mind. Eccles. vii. 25; ix. 3.

4. He was in a state of utter wretchedness.

Naked—homeless—wandering abroad in a state of pain and distraction. A true picture of the sinner. See the prodigal; also, Rev. iii. 17. "Way of transgressors is hard."

5. He was his own tormentor.

"He was in the mountains, and in the tombs, crying and cutting himself with stones;" Mark v. 5. "O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself." Sinner ruins his reputation—destroys his health—embitters his life—and murders his soul.

6. He was dangerous to others.

"Exceeding fierce;" Matt. viii. 28. "One sinner destroyeth much good." It is sin and Satanic influence that fills men with anger, wrath, maliciousness, revenge, &c.; "from whence come wars and fightings," &c. Jas. iv. 1, &c.

7. No man could tame him.

See Mark v. 4. They had "bound him with chains and in fetters," &c.; ver. 29. So, the sinner is beyond recovery by any human device or power. Philosophy has tried and failed; legislators have tried and failed; civilization and education have failed. The power of the Son of God is, alone, sufficient to deliver from sin, and to save from the wrath to come. It cannot be effected by "might or power;" but by the Spirit of the Lord of Hosts.

Notice,

II. *His Restoration.*

Here, several things must be observed:

1. He was found of Christ.

Christ landed on the coast, and discovered him in his misery. So, Jesus has come expressly into our world to save sinners—to seek and to save that which is lost. And Christ had compassion on him. He beheld his wretchedness, and contemplated his deliverance.

2. The instrumental means was Christ's voice.

He spake, "and said, Come out of the man, thou unclean spirit;" Mark v. 8. What a powerful word! He tried it on the deaf, and they heard; on the dumb, and they spoke; on the blind, and they saw; on lepers, and they were cleansed; on the winds and storms, and they were calmed; on the dead, and they lived; and now, on devils, and they trembled and fled before him! He also speaks pardon to the guilty, and peace to the distracted, breast.

Observe,

3. The efficient means was the divine power.

"The voice of the Lord is powerful;" Psalm civ. 7. His word, too, is omnipotent. "He spake, and all things were made; he commanded, and they stood fast." Gospel is the power of God to salvation. Christ has power on earth to forgive sins. Able to save to the uttermost &c.

4. The perfection of his cure

He was found,

(1) Quiescent; "sitting." No longer wandering abroad—no longer driven by the foul spirits—calm and composed. Soul found of Christ, and restored by him, finds rest, &c.

(2) Clothed. Sensible of his shame—garments obtained. So, the soul clothed with the best robe—the garment of salvation.

(3) "In his right mind." Eye, no longer wild, but beaming with intelligence—tongue, no longer raving, but speaking words of soberness—feet, ceased to wander—hands, no longer maimed himself—an entire and complete change. So, the grace of God produces a new creation, erases the image of Satan, and engraves upon the soul the image of God. Ezek. xviii. 31; 2 Cor. v. 17.

Observe,

III. *The Effects produced.*

1. He desired to abide with Christ.

Perhaps from fear of his old adversaries. Very proper. Soul's safety is to be near Christ. The believer feels the force of the lines of the poet:

> "Hide me, O my Saviour, hide,
> Till the storms of life are passed;
> Safe into the haven guide,
> O, receive my soul at last."

Or he might desire this from gratitude and love to Christ; attachment to his benefactor and deliverer. But Christ forbade him and commanded him to go to his own house, &c. Ver. 39.

2. He was obedient to Christ.

His will was lost in Christ's. With joy and gladness he went forth and published abroad what Christ had done for him. Pardoned souls are called to show forth Christ's power and grace, and to testify what great things he hath done for them

APPLICATION.

Here is a true picture, (1) Of the state and misery of sinners. (2) Of Christ's willingness and ability to save. And, (3) Of the duty of those who have been brought out of darkness into his marvellous light.

SKELETON XLIV.

THE LOVE OF GOD TO A PERISHING WORLD.

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."—*John* iii. 16.

TEXT an epitome of the gospel—a concise statement of the blessed scheme of redemption. In which we have,

I. *The grand Design contemplated by God.*

That men "might not perish, but have everlasting life."

Notice,

1. Man's perishing state is implied.

This is abundantly established by other statements of Scripture. "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin." All men are naturally in unbelief, therefore children of wrath, and condemned already. Man's perishing state includes,

(1) The tendency of the body to dissolution. "Appointed unto all men once to die," &c. "Dust thou art," &c.

(2) The present spiritual death of the soul. Dead in trespasses and sin. Image of God defaced. Powers of the mind alienated from God. Result, restlessness and misery. No peace, &c.

(3) The exposure of the soul to the bitter pains of eternal death. "Soul that sinneth shall die." "The wicked shall be turned into hell," &c.

2. What God contemplated in the scheme of redemption.

(1) Restoration of the soul to the life and image of God.

(2) The resurrection of the body by the power and in the likeness of Christ.

(3) A title to, meetness for, and the enjoyment of, eternal life in the world to come.

Notice,

II. *The Means by which God executed his glorious Design*

He gave his only-begotten Son. Observe

1. The person.

"His only-begotten Son." "His fellow." Though he assumed the form of a servant, yet he thought it not robbery to be equal with God. See Heb. i. 2, &c. Observe,

2. He gave his Son.

He did so by promise—in types, and shadows, and sacrifices—prophetically—at last, actually, in the fulness of time, 'he sent forth his Son," &c.; Gal. iv. 4.

3. The end for which he gave him

To assume human nature—to magnify the law—to reveal the doctrines of the gospel—to be the example of his people—to shed his blood as a ransom for sin, and thus to die in the place of transgressors—to rise again for the justification of sinners—to be the ever-living advocate of his church, &c.

4. The persons for whom he gave him.

"The world." "And do testify, that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world." "And he is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world." John i. 29; 2 Cor. v. 14, &c.; 1 John iv. 14; ii. 2.

Notice,

III. *The divinely appointed Mode by which Men obtain the Benefits of this Gift.*

"That whosoever believeth," &c

Observe,

1. The mode appointed is faith.

"Believeth;" so as fully to credit God's testimony of our guilt, wretchedness, and danger—his mercy—Christ's ability and readiness to save, &c.; and heartily to embrace him in his mediatorial capacity, relying solely and fully upon him for acceptance and eternal life.

2. The extent of this mode.

"Whosoever believeth." It embraces all countries, colors, and ranks of mankind. It includes all grades of guilt, and all hues of moral character, and all aggravations. It embraces every child of man, save the obstinate, impenitent unbeliever.

IV. *The great original Cause of God's munificent and unspeakable Gift to the World.*

"God so loved the world."

The cause was his own free, unsolicited, sovereign love. The degree of this love is referred to, not determined—for it is only known in all its richness and vastness to the divine mind, and is recorded by the

word so." Eternity itself will be too limited to solve this word, and to find out its unbounded significations.

It is love high as heaven—deep as the verge of perdition—wide as the universe—and durable as the everlasting ages to come

APPLICATION.

Learn, 1. The fallen state of our world, and the perishing condition of our race. 2. The good news which the gospel proclaims; God's love and mercy towards it. 3. The easy way of access to the salvation God has provided; not by works, but by faith. 4. The inexcusableness of those who perish. For "whosoever believeth shall have everlasting life.

SKELETON XLV.

GOD'S EXPECTATION FROM HIS VINEYARD

"And he looked, that it should bring forth grapes." *Isaiah* v. 2.

The parable, of which the text is a part, refers to God's ancient Israel, and exhibits his goodness, care, and long-suffering towards them. It is equally applicable to our own nation; but at present we desire to consider the subject in a personal sense; and thus, while it will apply to the nation as a collective body, it will commend itself to the conscience of every man, who has been favored with the distinguished bounties of providence, and the rich privileges and blessings of the gospel of the grace of God.

Keeping in view the whole parable, notice,

I. *The Ground of God's Expectations.*

1. The nature of the plants.

The plants were the "choicest vine," ver. 2. Capable of yielding fruit, and the best of that sort of plants. Man is eminently fitted for the service of God; his distinguished faculties, by which he can know God—judge of the divine commands; and affections, to love and delight in God. He possesses those powers which, when subjected to the operations of the grace and Spirit of God, are every way calculated to serve and show forth the praises of God. Notice,

2. The situation of the plants.

"A very fruitful hill,' ver. 1. Not on rocky ground, or in a barren desert; but a hill of fruitfulness. How applicable to our unnumbered privileges; the light and means of improvement we possess; written word, preached gospel, numerous ordinances, &c.!

3. The attention and care he had bestowed

"Fenced it;" "gathered out the stones;" "built a tower in the midst of it," &c. How has Divine Providence favored us! Contrast our condition and means of spiritual fruitfulness with the Jews, with all their advantages—with the early Christian churches—the time of reformation from papal darkness—the privileges of our countrymen a century ago. God has, indeed, been removing every obstacle, and exalting us to heaven with mercies, and opportunities of happiness and salvation.

Observe,

II. *The Nature of his Expectations.*

"He looked for grapes;" such fruit as the vine can and ought to yield. He looks for the fruit of holiness.

1. This he contemplated when he proposed our redemption.

'Predestinated to be conformed to the image of his Son;" Rom. viii. 29.

2. Christ died for this end,

"That he might redeem us from all iniquity," &c.; Tit. ii. 14.

3. The gospel calls us to holiness.

The grace of God, that bringeth salvation, &c.; teaching us to deny ungodliness, &c.; Tit. ii. 12; Heb. xii. 14.

4. The Spirit and grace of God produce the fruit of holiness in the soul.

Being made free from sin, &c., Rom vi. 22; 1 Cor. vi. 11.

Let us consider,

III. *The Extent of his Expectations*

He expects,

1. It seasonable as to time.

The Psalmist says, the godly man yields his fruit "in his season;" Psal. i. 2. There are peculiar seasons for the various sorts of fruit. Season of prosperity; he expects gratitude, joy, and gladness. In times of affliction—patience: provocation—meekness: adversity—contentment: sickness—prayer: dark seasons—hope, &c. He expects,

2. It good in quality.

Not leaves, nor counterfeit fruit; not merely lip-fruit; but that it be the heart

fruit of love and sincerity, and producing uniform obedience in the life.

He expects,

3. That it be proportionate in quantity—

To the talents he lends; mercies and privileges he bestows; opportunities we possess. See parable of talents.

4. That it be increasing in amount.

"Grow in grace." "Leaving the principles of the doctrines of Christ," &c. Heb. vi. 1.

5. That it be enduring in its nature.

Parable of the sower. Way-side, stony-ground, &c. That it endure,

(1) The heat of prosperity. Uzziah's did not; 2 Chron. xxvi. 16.

(2) Frost of afflictions: Job. "We count them happy who endure;" Jas. v. 11.

(3) The storms of opposition. "War a good warfare," &c. "Endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ."

APPLICATION.

Let us learn, 1. To estimate our mercies. 2. To remember our responsibility on account of them. 3. To improve them, by bringing forth much fruit to the glory of God.

SKELETON XLVI.

GOD'S DISAPPOINTMENT FROM HIS VINEYARD

"And it brought forth wild grapes."—*Isai.* v. 2.

In the former skeleton we noticed God's expectation from his vineyard: and here is expressed the final result; when it should have yielded "grapes," proper and good fruit, it brought forth "wild grapes." The word used for wild grapes does not signify grapes merely of an inferior quality, but poisonous fruit, such as is described, Deut. xxxii. 32, 33: "For their vine is of the vine of Sodom, and of the fields of Gomorrah: their grapes are grapes of gall, their clusters are bitter: their wine is the poison of dragons, and the cruel venom of asps."

Observe,

I. *His Disappointment.*

"He looked for grapes, and it brought forth wild grapes."

Strictly speaking, God cannot be disappointed; as he knows all things from the beginning to the end. Past, present, and future are the same to his immutable mind.

Observe

1. The grounds of his disappointment.

(1) Powers perverted. Good vine brought forth poisonous fruit. Understanding in darkness—judgment corrupted—conscience defiled—affections alienated and placed on idols—time murdered—talents prostituted, &c.

(2) Goodness abused. Planted in a fruitful soil, yet bad fruit: not pagan soil, nor papal ground, but the favored land of Britain. Exalted to heaven with blessings and mercies.

(3) Divine privileges unimproved. Stones gathered out, guarded, &c.; constant care bestowed; still, the fruit bitter and worthless. How mindful God has been of us how he has invited, exhorted, and expostulated with us, &c.

2. The disappointment itself.

"He looked for grapes," and behold, it yielded poisonous fruit.

(1) He looked for lip-fruit; prayer praise, holy conversation, &c.; and it yielded foolish talking, levity, falsehood, profanity, in short, the mouth became as a fountain of deadly waters.

(2) He looked for heart-fruit: love, trust, holiness, &c.; and they were as "whited sepulchres," "cages of unclean birds," full of rottenness and pollution.

(3) He looked for life-fruit; works of justice, goodness, mercy, truth, &c.; but he found malignity, injustice, pride, sensuality, oppression, &c.

Wild grapes, bitter to the taste, even as gall, and as the poison of asps in the stomach.

Mark,

II. *The Effects of his Disappointment*

1. Protection withdrawn.

"Hedge taken away." Conscience allowed to slumber—holy restraints removed—spirit of madness and infatuation allowed to remain unmolested—given up to their delusions.

2. Privileges removed.

"Not pruned nor digged." "Ephraim is joined to his idols, let him alone." Candlestick taken out of its place. Left a prey to their destroyers.

3. Judgments threatened.

"Trodden down; no rain," &c. Infliction of the divine displeasure; history of the Jews full of illustrative instances

How forcibly it applies, also, to many nations, cities, churches, families, individuals! Every unfruitful branch is cut off and cast into the fire.

Observe the equity, propriety, and necessity of this. God can do no more for his vineyard than what he hath done; and they perish, despite of all the love and mercy of God towards them.

APPLICATION.

(1) Let the servants of God consider their privileges and mercies; and render to God according as they have received from him. (2) Let the unfruitful consider their state and danger. And, likewise, (3) Let backsliders return to the Lord, that the divine displeasure may be averted.

SKELETON XLVII.

THE ATONEMENT

"Without shedding of blood is no remission."—*Heb.* ix. 22

The doctrine of the atonement is the basis of the Christian structure. It is connected with all that is consolatory in the experience, and powerful in the practice, of the believer. Without this doctrine, the light of truth is beclouded, the hope of acceptance doubtful, and the proposed remedy for man's sin and misery, of very questionable efficiency. Let us consider,

I. The Necessity. II. The Nature, and III. The Effects of the Atonement.

I. *The Necessity of the Atonement.*

This necessity arises,

1. From man's sin, and its necessary consequences.

A holy and righteous law was given to a free and responsible agent. Sanctioned by rewards and penalties—that law was violated, hence the penalty was justly incurred; that penalty was death. Notice,

2. Man's utter incapability to atone for himself.

If he did not stand when holy, how shall he serve God, or be acceptable to him, now he is guilty and polluted? Besides, if obedience could be rendered in future, that could not be efficient in removing past guilt, and the curse annexed to it; neither could tears of repentance make amends for the violated law, &c. Consider,

3. The demands of the law cannot be relaxed with honor to the lawgiver.

If relaxed, truth would be violated, rights of justice be infringed, interests of holiness suffer, confusion and disorder be introduced into the administration of God. Here, then, is man's misery and exigency. What did Deity do? He devised the expedient of the atonement; and this leads us to consider,

II. *The Nature of the Atonement.*

The person atoning must,

1. Be of superior dignity to the persons for whom the atonement is made.

So was the great sacrifice provided. He possessed all power, and honor, and glory, infinitely higher than the first Adam, when in a state of innocency. Lord of all, &c.

2. He must possess the same nature as the offender.

Law was given to man, violated by man, and the penalty is justly demanded from man; therefore it behooved Christ to be "made of a woman, under the law," &c., Gal. iv. 4.

3. He must have a right to dispose of his own life, and freely offer himself to this end.

No mere creature has this right. God is the only rightful owner and disposer of men. Christ had this right: John x. 18. And he did freely become a sacrifice for sins. "Lo, I come, as it is written," &c.; Heb. x. 7.

4. He must approve of the law, and recognise the justice of its claims.

So Christ did; he delighted in God's law, he loved to perform it. It was his meat and drink, &c.

5. He must be free from all charges of personal guilt.

If not, he would require a sacrifice for himself—his offering would be polluted and therefore valueless. Christ was spotless.

6. He must answer all the demands of the law, and endure its curse.

Christ embodied the law in his life. He was the ten commandments alive; it was engraven on his heart, and he "was made a curse for us," to "redeem us from the curse of the law;" Gal. iii. 13. As man's blood or life was justly forfeited, he "gave his life a ransom for many," Matt. xx. 28. "Suffered the just for the unjust," &c.; 1 Pet. iii. 18. And thus, by the shedding of his blood he obtained for us remission of

sin. This doctrine of the atonement was set forth,

(1) In the ancient ceremonies and sacrifices. Lamb slain. Scape-goat, &c., see Heb. ix. 19–22.

(2) Clearly stated by the prophets, who testified of the person and work of Christ; Isai. liii. 4–12; Zech. xiii. 1, 7. It was,

(3) Taught by the Saviour; John x. 11–18. Also at the supper, Matt. xxvi. 27.

(4) It is a prominent doctrine in the epistles; 2 Cor. v. 21; 1 Tim. ii. 5; 1 Pet. i. 18; John iv. 19; Rev. i. 5, &c. Notice,

III. *The Effects of the Atonement.*

1. All the perfections of Jehovah have been illustriously displayed.

Truth, justice, holiness, mercy, love, grace, power, wisdom, &c., &c.

2. The atonement has rendered man's salvation possible.

God can now be "the just God, and yet the Saviour;" can save the sinner, and yet do no violence to the rights of holiness and truth. It has opened a door of escape from danger, and a way of access to God and to eternal life. God says, "Return unto me, for I have redeemed thee." He may now be pardoned, obtain peace, be made holy, and at last be eternally saved.

3. The atonement leaves the impenitent without excuse.

He need not perish, for Christ hath died. Jesus has come that he may have life, &c. If he believes the record of the gospel, he shall have everlasting life; if not, his sin of unbelief is his own act, and he is therefore the inexcusable author of his own ruin: John iii. 14–18.

APPLICATION.

(1) Let the subject of the atonement be scripturally investigated, that it may be rightly understood. (2) Let it be cordially received, by a hearty faith; Rom. x. 9. (3) Let a scriptural knowledge and a cordial reception of it, fill the soul with hope and joy. (4) Let not the dying sinner reject the only way of salvation.

SKELETON XLVIII

THE PASSOVER.

"Christ, our passover is sacrificed for us"—1 *Cor.* v. 7.

THERE was scarcely a sacrifice under the law, but what had some typical reference to Christ. The slain and scape-goats particularly exhibited the nature and design of Christ's mediatorial work. None did this in a more striking and illustrious way than the feast of the passover, and we have the authority of the text for confidently affirming that "Christ, our passover, is sacrificed for us," &c. In showing the resemblance between the passover and the sacrifice of Christ, observe,

I. *The Appointment of the Passover.*

1. It was appointed by God.

The whole was the result of the Divine arrangement. The Lord gave orders in reference to the whole of it, to Moses and Aaron; Exod. xii. 3, &c. So the appointment of Christ was of God, he "gave him," "sent him," "delivered him up," &c.

2 It was appointed in connection with the deliverance of the Israelites from Egypt.

So Christ came to deliver us from darkness, slavery, and the wrath to come. Notice,

II. *The Animal selected.*

1. It was a lamb.

So Christ is repeatedly called, on account of his innocence, meekness, humility, patience, &c.; Isai. liii. 7; John i. 29; 1 Pet. i. 19; Rev. v. 6, 12, 13, &c.; vii. 10, 14.

2. It was to be a male of a year old, and without blemish.

Denoting perfection of kind; not weakly, infirm, nor diseased. So Christ was altogether perfect, without spot, &c.; Heb. vii. 26.

3. The lamb was to be separated from the flock, to be devoted to this purpose.

Exod. xii. 5. So was Christ separated and appointed to this work. Separated to this in the divine designs and purposes, prophecies, in his birth, life, &c. He appeared in our world for this end, &c Notice,

4. It was to be kept alive four days after its separation.

So Christ was separated and distinguished as the world's promised Redeemer, for about four thousand years, and a thousand years is with the Lord as one day. Observe,

III. *The Sacrificing of the Paschal Lamb.*

1. The lamb was to be slain.

So Jesus was to be pu to death. Life offered a ransom. "Thou wast slain;" Rev. v. 9.

2. It was to be slain before the whole assembly.

Exod. xii. 6. So Christ was thus publicly put to death.

3. It was to be slain in the evening.

So Christ was offered in the evening of he world, in the last days; also in the evening of the day, about three o'clock in the afternoon, supposed to be about the time the Jews were offering the paschal lamb. Observe,

IV. *The Mode of receiving the Paschal Feast.*

1. The sacrifice was to be roasted with fire.

Exod. xii. 8. The fastening of the lamb to the instrument for this purpose, strikingly exhibited the manner of Christ's death by the cross, when his soul, too, was offered to God, and mystically consumed by the fire of divine wrath, which otherwise would have consumed the whole family of man.

2. Not a bone of the lamb was to be broken.

How wonderfully this was fulfilled in reference to Christ! John xix. 36.

3. All the flesh of the lamb was to be eaten.

So Christ is to be received, and spiritually eaten; John vi. 54. Several particulars here deserve notice.

(1) It was to be eaten only by Israelites, or those who were believing proselytes. Christ only received by faith.

(2) It was to be eaten standing; Exod. xii. 11, &c. So those who receive Christ must be ready to follow Christ, &c. To leave the vanities of the world, and be crucified to it.

(3) It was to be eaten with bitter herbs. Either denoting the sorrow of heart on account of sin, as expressed in Zechariah xii. 10, or the crosses and sorrows a profession of Christ would ensure.

(4) It was to be eaten with unleavened bread. Denoting the love, sincerity, and truth with which we are to receive and profess Christ; see ver. 8. Notice,

4. The blood of the slain lamb was to be sprinkled on the door-posts of their dwellings.

Exod. xii. 22. So the blood of Jesus is to be applied to the hearts and consciences of believers; Heb. x. 22. Notice,

5. The blessed result was, that such families were preserved from the destroying angel.

So by a personal reception of Christ, and the application of his blood, we are delivered from condemnation and eternal death, and finally enter the land of rest.

APPLICATION.

All who do not receive upon their souls the blood of Christ, our paschal lamb, must inevitably perish

SKETCH XXXVI.

WAITING UPON GOD, &c

"Wait on the Lord, and keep his ways."—*Psalm* xxxvii. 34.

This Psalm is full of consolation to the pious mind, and contains a rich variety of precious declarations. There is the promise of necessary food, and permanent residence in the land, ver. 3; the fulfilment of all lawful desires, ver. 4; providential direction, ver. 5; the possession of the earth, ver. 9; support and preservation, ver. 17; establishment in the law and ways of God, ver. 31. Then follows the reasonable direction of the text, "Wait," &c.

We shall, I. Illustrate, and then, II. Urge the Duties specified in the text.

I. *Illustrate the Duties specified in the Text.*

"Wait upon the Lord, and keep his way."

1. "Wait upon the Lord."

We are to do this,

(1) In the exercise of public worship. Serve him in his temple with all his saints Hear his word; celebrate his praises; join in the offering up of prayer; worship before him in the beauty of holiness.

(2) In the religious services of the family. Erect an altar in our families to his glory; command and instruct our children, lead them to his throne; bear them up in prayerful remembrance, &c.

(3) In the retirements of the closet. "Enter into thy closet," &c. Here we may hold more close and intimate communion with God, greater facilities for meditation, &c., enlargedness and fervency in prayer.

In waiting upon God, we should do it,

(1) With reverence and humility. Not forgetting the majesty and holiness of his character. How the hosts of heaven worship before him; Isai. vi. 1, &c. And also remembering our own littleness, unworthiness, &c. We should wait upon him,

(2) In the exercise of grateful recollections for all his goodness and mercy towards us; in giving us being, and in preserving us; especially for his love as manifested in the gift of his only-begotten Son, gospel, Spirit, privileges, &c.

(3) With feelings of affection and delight. Souls burning with love to him, as our heavenly Father, unchangeable Friend, our soul's only portion, and exceeding great reward.

(4) With hope and confidence. Trusting in his word—resting on his covenant—and expecting the enjoyment of all his promises.

The other duty specified in the text is,

2. To keep his way.

The way he has marked out for us—into which he guides us—and wherein he keeps and protects us.

(1) The way of his providence. "Steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord." How he directed Abraham, Jacob, the Israelites in the desert, &c.; David from the sheepfold to the throne, &c.

(2) The way of his ordinances. Like Zacharias and Elizabeth, walking in them blameless. Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, &c.

(3) The way of his precepts. Way of duty—way of practical obedience. To follow him as dear children—to have respect to all his commandments—and to walk in his counsels to do them. "Ye are my friends," &c. "Blessed are they that do his commandments," &c.

To keep his way includes,

(1) A right and scriptural knowledge of it. To be clear as to what is our duty—what the Lord would have us to do; and, therefore, an intimate acquaintance with his blessed word, wherein his will is revealed.

(2) A hearty approval of it. A preference to do it, above our own way, or the way of man. Rejoicing in it, as being the wisest, happiest, and safest; as being right in itself, and glorious in its termination. Psal. cxix. 35, 40, 46, 93, 127, &c.

(3) A diligent employment of those means he has appointed. Meditation reading the word, watchfulness, prayer, Christian fellowship, &c.

Let us, by assigning some reasons why we should "wait upon the Lord, and keep his way,"

II. *Urge these Duties upon the Attention of God's People.*

We should "wait upon the Lord, and keep his way,"

1. Because it is our duty.

We are his children; his will ought to be our rule. His subjects; and his laws, therefore, are imperatively binding upon us. Besides, as a Father, he is infinitely wise and benevolent; and as a Sovereign all his arrangements are founded in equity and truth. We should do so,

2. Because of the peace and comfort it produces.

"Great peace have they who love thy law," &c. "Ways are ways of pleasantness," &c.

3. Because of the safety it secures.

They shall walk safely. "Fear not, for I am with thee," &c.

4. Because of the reward revealed.

They shall enter through the gates into the celestial city—have access to the tree of life, &c.—receive the crown of life &c.

APPLICATION.

1. Let the subject induce us to wait upon God and keep his way more cheerfully and constantly, until we come to Zion with songs, and everlasting joy upon our heads, &c.

2. Invite the poor sinner to wait upon God with penitence and faith, for pardon happiness, and eternal salvation.

SKETCH XXXVII

THE MYSTERY OF GODLINESS.

"Great is the mystery of godliness."—1 *Tim.* iii. 16.

THE text contains the grand leading events in the life and works of Christ, and which form the basis of the great scheme of human redemption. The clause which forms the text is a kind of introduction to these events.

We shall endeavor to show, I. In what respects the scheme of Redemption is a

great Mystery. And, II. How it may be said to be a great Mystery of Godliness.

I. *Show in what respects the Scheme of Redemption is a great Mystery.*

It is so, if we consider,

1. The subjects of redemption.

Man, and not angels. Man, who had been invested with dignity, and riches and happiness; who was made holy, freely fell, and thus chose the death that had been denounced in case of transgression. Man, unworthy of God's mercy, and utterly reckless of it.

If we consider,

2. The mode of his redemption.

Was not effected by a simple declaration of pardon. "Not redeemed with corruptible things," &c.; but by the incarnation, obedient and sorrowful life, and ignominious death, of God's only Son, by the precious blood of Christ.

"Amazing love! how could it be,
That thou, my Lord, shouldst die for me?"

If we consider,

3. The glorious consequences of redemption.

Heaven reconciled to earth. God now at peace with the returning believing sinner. Offer of pardon, peace, adoption, sanctification, eternal glory, in and through Christ. God now,

"Makes slaves the partners of his throne,
Decked with an everlasting crown."

Now, this may be called a great mystery; as it is,

(1) What human wisdom could never have devised. It is a stumbling-block to the Jew, and foolishness to the Greek. The world, by wisdom, never could have found out God, or obtained reconciliation with him. Such a mystery,

(2) As completely baffled devils. They little thought of the result, when instigating Judas to betray him—the Chief Priests to condemn and crucify him. They knew not that in this way he was obtaining salvation for the world. It was, however, thus that he overcame principalities and powers, &c. Such a mystery,

(3) That angels cannot comprehend it. They desire to look into these things, &c. They pass by sun, and moon, and stars, and become the students of the cross; but their enlarged capacities are quite inadequate to the mighty task. God only knows the love of God to man; 1 Pet. i. 12. Such a mystery,

(4) As will require eternity to explore it. There we shall see more clearly—have many facilities over the present; but we hesitate not to say, that eternity itself will be found too short to know fully and perfectly the height, and depth, and length, and breadth of the love of God, which passeth knowledge. Observe,

II. *That this is a great Mystery of Godliness.*

It is so, inasmuch as,

1. It reveals the only foundation of godliness.

Opens the way to the true knowledge of God; brings us to the only medium of securing the favor of God; renews us in the image of God; and puts within us the Spirit of God, by which we know that we are the sons of God; Rom. viii 1, 2, 15, 16

2. By a belief of this we become entitled to all the blessings of godliness.

By faith justified. Children of God by faith. By faith enjoy the precious promises. Live by faith. And die happy, and are forever blessed, if we die in the faith.

3. By its influence on the heart and life it leads to the practice of godliness.

Grace of God, &c., teacheth us to deny ungodliness, &c.; Tit. ii. 12. "Sanctify them through thy truth," &c.; John xvii 17.

4. As the whole redounds to the honor and glory of God.

God is magnified in all his Son hath done; and is glorified in the experience and lives of all who are saved by his grace. They show forth his praise now; and they will adore and praise him in heaven forever. Here his wisdom, power, truth, holiness, justice, mercy, goodness and grace are all exhibited in happy and eternal harmony; Rev. iv. 11; v. 12, 13; Eph. iii 21.

APPLICATION.

Learn,

1. The true greatness and sublimity of the Christian religion. The production of the eternal mind of God. A religion which in all its parts is only perfectly known to Himself. Let this thought humble us, and check vain and impertinent curiosity. Secret things belong to the Lord; revealed things, to us and to our children forever.

2. Let all diligently search that revelation he has given, and thus be made wise unto salvation.

SKETCH XXXVIII.

MANIFESTATION OF GOD IN THE FLESH.

"God was manifest in the flesh."—1 *Tim.* iii. 3–16

THE heathen often spoke of the descent of their deities, and volumes have been filled with their wonderful achievements. But theirs was a religion of ignorance and superstition:—they "worshipped they knew not what," and their history is full of absurdity and folly. It is, however, a truth of the highest importance to the Christian, that the God in whom he trusts did descend to visit our world, and was manifested in the flesh.

Let us consider,

I. *Some of those various Ways in which God has manifested himself to Man.*

It may be necessary to remark, that the blessed God, being a pure Spirit, is invisible to man. And that, as to his essence, "no man hath seen God at any time." If we see God, it follows, therefore, that Jehovah must adopt some medium suited to our state and capacities

It may be observed,

1. That God has manifested himself to us in his works.

All things are full of him, and bear the marks of his hands, or the impress of his feet. We see him in the light of day, and in the darkness of night. In the rugged mountain, and in the fertile valley. In the expanse of the waters, and in the outstretched canopy of heaven, rolling the planets in their respective spheres; for to the ear of the Christian,

> "They are ever singing as they shine,
> The hand that made us is divine!"

2. God has manifested himself in his word.

Here he has revealed his character, name, will, and perfections. Here his works and ways are exhibited to man. Here we have a more clear and comprehensive view of Deity than could possibly be given in his works. Here are the words of his mouth; for he spake or presented himself in visions or dreams, to the holy prophets, and they were merely the media through which God declared himself to man.

3. God manifested himself of old, in connection with various symbols.

To Moses in the bush—in the cloud on Mount Sinai—in the pillar and cloud in the desert—in the cloud also in the tabernacle, and in the temple; Exod. iii. 2; xiii. 21 xix. 18; xl. 34. Let us now consider,

II. *That manifestation of God specifies in the text.*

"God was manifest in the flesh This manifestation was,

1. In the person of his Son.

'The Son hath declared him;" John i. 18; see Heb. i. 8; John iii. 16; Gal. iv. 4. In his Son dwelt all the fulness of the divine glory. This manifestation was,

2. In the fulness of the times.

The period selected and approved of by God, as the fittest for developing the divine glory, spoken of as the last days, &c. This manifestation,

3. Was the most glorious which God ever gave to our world.

Here were not only displayed those perfections which had been exhibited in creation, such as wisdom, power, and goodness; but also purity, justice, mercy, and grace "In Christ dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." This manifestation,

4. Was essential to the redemption of the world.

It appears from revelation, that, in order that all his attributes might harmonize in the salvation of man, it behooved Christ to suffer; and if so, it was essential that he should become incarnate, and thus be capable of bearing our sins in his own body on the tree; Luke xxiv 46; 1 Pet. ii. 24. This,

5. Was the most mysterious manifestation.

That Deity should become wrapped in humanity—the eternal God become an infant of days—the Sovereign of the universe, the servant of servants—the Prince of glory, the sacrifice for rebels. Well may human wisdom be lost in the vast profound!—well may angels wonder and adore!—well may devils be overwhelmed and tremble!

> "'Tis mystery all! The Immortal dies!
> Who can explore the strange design?
> In vain the first-born seraph tries
> To sound the depths of love divine,
> 'Tis mercy all! let earth adore,
> Let angel-minds inquire no more."

6. This mystery is an important article of Christian belief.

Not that we are to believe as to the mode of the inexplicable parts of the mystery,

this is impossible; but to believe the fact, as one which God has plainly stated, and which he has evidently placed at the foundation of the Christian structure; it appears to be the very life-blood of Christianity, that Christ is truly the Son of God, and that he is over all, "God blessed for evermore;" Rom. xi. 5.

APPLICATION.

1. This subject should teach us humility. What are we that we should suppose ourselves capable of grasping a subject, which seems to have been the greatest effort that ever proceeded from the infinite Jehovah?

2. Let it excite to diligence in meditation, and reading the divine testimony. We may know much more than what we do, by drinking freely of the waters of life. It should,

3. Lead to anticipation. We now see through a glass darkly, but shortly we shall see face to face; 1 Cor. xiii. 12. Finally, it should fill us with confidence in the power, and dignity, and goodness of our Redeemer. Our Saviour is Jehovah of Hosts, in whom is everlasting strength.

SKETCH XXXIX.

THE CHURCH'S BANNERS.

"In the name of our God we will set up our banners."—*Psal.* xx 5.

The church of God has to wage constant war with the powers of the world, and the prince of darkness. The contest has been carried on from the fall to the present hour, and will be extended until Satan shall be bruised under the feet of God's people; Rom. xvi. 20. The Psalmist knew experimentally the nature of the conflict, and was encouraged by the prayers and resolutions of the church as contained in this psalm. Our text contains

I. *A Reference to the Church's Banners.*

A banner is a flag or standard, generally bearing some inscription, often the name or arms of the country to which it belongs. The Christian's banner is the gospel of truth; it bears on it the form of a cross, and the inscription is, "Unto him that loved us," &c.; Rev. i. 5.

Let us notice the propriety of the figure employed; this will appear when we notice,

1. That the banner is unfurled at the proclamation of war.

The spirit, maxims, and statements of the gospel are all at war with the corruptions of human nature—the fashions of the world—and the empire of Satan; 2 Cor x. 4; 1 Tim. i. 18; Matt. x. 34.

2. The banner is also elevated as a token of peace.

The white banner of truce is a sign for the cessation of hostilities. We are called to wage war with sin, but to be reconciled, and be at peace with God. The gospel is a message of peace. "How beautiful the feet of them that bring good tidings," &c.; Isai. liii. 7.

3. The banner is hoisted as the centre of attraction.

The rallying point for the scattered troops. The gospel is the only appointed medium of uniting the church; God never intended that they should be united by human creeds, or systems, or distinctions, but by and in the truth;—all are by faith in Christ Jesus.

4. Banners were elevated for direction.

Gospel is not only the record of life, and the message of salvation, but the Christian's guide and directory to heaven.

5. Banners are waved as signals of triumph.

When the conqueror returned, the citizens hailed him; garlands were formed and streaming banners waved; and thus he passed through the triumphal arches of his native city. The Christian is a conqueror, and he conquers by the power of the truth. "More than conquerors," &c.; Isai. xxxv. 13; 2 Pet. i. 11; Rom. viii. 37. Observe then,

II. *The Church's Resolution.*

"In the name of our God we will set up our banners."

These banners have been variously dealt with; opposed by foes; neglected by slumbering friends; and have been made to bear false inscriptions by false teachers, &c. The true church ever feels the importance of setting them up.

In doing this,

1. Suitable elevations must be chosen.

Houses must be erected where God can be worshipped, and his truth proclaimed Psal. cxxxii. 5.

2. Banner-bearers must be supported

Men who shall lift up their voice as a trumpet, and run to and fro to preach the gospel of salvation—their wants must be met—hands held up—hearts encouraged, &c.—"brethren, pray for us," &c.; Gal. vi. 6.

3. The banners must be set up—

"In the name of our God." By his authority—for his glory—in dependence upon his influences. All the glory, excellency, and influence of the gospel is of God; Rom. i. 16; 2 Cor. iv. 7.

Now there are many reasons why the church should feel this resolution; especially,

(1) Because of the righteousness of the cause. God has a right to reign over all his creatures—both the earth and the heaven are the Lord's.

(2) Because it is associated with purest feelings of philanthropy. Glory to God, peace on earth, and good will to men—the only message of salvation to a perishing world.

(3) Because our profession, and our affection to Christ and immortal souls, should constrain us to count all things as dross for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord; and that all men might know him, be blessed in him, and call him blessed.

APPLICATION.

1. Let the soldiers of the cross be strong, and quit themselves like men; rejoice in the goodness of their cause—skill and power of their Captain—and the final success of their enterprise.

2. Let all be done with purity of motive in the name of the Lord.

3. Let the opposing sinner cease his foolish opposition; and sue for peace, and live.

SKETCH XL.

GOD'S WITNESSES.

"His witnesses unto the people."—*Acts* xiii. 31.

PAUL, in the text, is referring to the fact of Christ's resurrection, and to the evidence in support of the fact which the disciples, and others who had seen the risen Saviour, could adduce, and as such were proper witnesses of it to the people. We intend to apply the text in a more general sense, and to consider all believers as Christ's "witnesses to the people." Let us show,

I. To what they witness. II. Before whom they witness. III. What kind of Witnesses they are.

Believers are witnesses. Let us then notice,

I. *To what they witness.*

1. They witness to the freeness and fulness of Christ's gospel.

How cordially they were invited—how heartily welcome they were to the gospel board—how abundantly they were fed with the rich provision of gospel grace, no upbraidings, no severe exactions—no evasive delays, &c. "Ho! every one that thirsteth," &c.; Isai. lv. 1, &c.

2. They witness to the efficacy of his grace.

How it opened their eyes—softened their hearts—destroyed their enmity—renewed their nature. "All old things passed away, and all things made new."

3. They witness to the fulfilment of the promises.

What did he promise? To give repentance—the spirit of grace—power to believe—full remission of sin—spirit of adoption—peace and joy in the Holy Ghost. And they found all these promises to be yea and amen in Christ Jesus, &c.

4. They witness to the pleasure of his service.

His yoke is supposed by many to be heavy, to be toil and drudgery—doctrines gloomy—ordinances wearisome, &c.—but they find that his yoke is easy—his burden light—his service joyous. Ways are ways of pleasantness, &c.

5. They witness to the kindness of his providence.

In preserving them—watching over them—leading them by a right way, &c. "All things work together," &c

Let us notice,

II. *Before whom they are to witness.*

1. Before the church; by union and fellowship with it; by forsaking all for Christ's sake: being separate; bearing the distinction of his followers.

2. Before the world.

Lights; salt of the earth; elevated cities; known by their spirit—conversation—practice; holding forth the word of life, confessing and testifying to the power of divine grace. Consider,

III. *What kind of Witnesses they are.*

1 They are competent witnesses.

They are not ignorant of what they pro-

fess; they testify of what they do know; of what they have seen, and felt of the love of God.

2. They are candid witnesses.

They have no reason to be otherwise; no temporal advantages to gain; often support their evidences at the greatest possible sacrifice; perhaps of reputation, property, liberty—and thousands, of life itself.

3. They are numerous witnesses.

First ages, thousands of them; so now, almost in every country under heaven; rich and poor, learned and illiterate; and they are increasing every day.

4. They are harmonious witnesses.

May differ in sentiments as to doctrines; but they are one in all those points of evidence referred to under the first head of this discourse. Yes, religion is one in its essence and sweetness, though not in degree and amount, in all cases and persons.

5. They are dying witnesses.

Yes, they witness in life and health: but they also witness in affliction, by patience and resignation; and in death, by peace, and oftentimes triumph. "Behold the perfect man," &c. "Blessed are the dead," &c. "O death, where is thy sting?" &c.

APPLICATION.

1. Let Christ's witnesses hold fast their profession.

2. Let sinners prove for themselves the service of Christ and the preciousness of his grace.

SKELETON XLIX.

THE NECESSITY OF HAVING THE SPIRIT OF CHRIST.

"Now, if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his."—*Rom.* viii. 9.

LET us offer a few observations on the various expressions in the text. Notice,

I. *The Spirit of Christ.*

Undoubtedly the Holy Spirit is meant Same verse, called "the Spirit of God." He is called "the Spirit of truth;" John xiv. 17—"of grace;" Heb. x. 29—"of promise;" Eph. i. 13—"of prophecy;" Rev. xix. 10—"of wisdom;" Eph. i. 17—"Holy Spirit;" Eph. iv. 30—"Spirit of glory," &c., &c.; 1 Pet. iv. 14. In the text, "the Spirit of Christ"

1. Because he formed the human nature of Christ.

Luke i. 35.

2. Because he anointed Christ, and dwelt in him without measure.

Matt. iii. 16; John iii. 34.

3. Because Christ procured for his church the outpouring of the Spirit, and sent it down upon them.

John xv. 26; and xiv 15.

4. Because the Spirit is the great efficient Agent in revealing Christ, and forming him in the hearts of believers.

John xv. 20; and xvi. 14.

II. *In what Respects Believers have the Spirit of Christ.*

1. They have him in his convincing and regenerating influences.

Convinced of sin, &c., regenerated or born of the Spirit; John iii. 5.

2. They have him in his adopting and comforting influences.

Spirit beareth witness, &c.; ver. 15, 16 Produces peace and comfort in the heart.

3. They have him in his sanctifying influences.

Producing greater degrees of holiness. "Changed from glory to glory, by the Spirit of the Lord;" 2 Cor. iii. 18.

4. In all his guiding and strengthening influences.

He guides into all truth, supports the soul, and gives it power to mortify the flesh, overcome the world, and attend to the duties of religion.

5. In all his beautifying and conforming influences to the image of Christ.

Produces the likeness of Christ in the soul—causes the Christian to exhibit a spirit similar to Christ's; humble, lowly, meek, patient, devout, benevolent, merciful, &c., &c.

6. The Spirit abides in believers as the earnest of eternal salvation.

Is itself the title, pledge, and produces the fitness necessary to eternal life; 2 Cor. i. 22.

III. *If any Man does not possess this Spirit, he is evidently not Christ's.*

1. If he does not possess this Spirit, he is yet an unconvinced sinner.

For this Spirit convinceth, &c Therefore he is none of his.

2. If he does not possess this Spirit, he is still in a state of nature.

For this Spirit makes all things new If in a state of nature, none of Christ's.

3. If he does not possess this Spirit, he is an unholy alien.

For this Spirit adopts and sanctifies. If so, he is none of his.

APPLICATION.

(1) Let the subject lead to self-examination, earnest prayer, and holy circumspection of life. (2) Let believers cultivate and cherish divine influences, and grieve not the Holy Spirit.

SKELETON L.

BEING SOUND IN GOD'S STATUTES.

"Let my heart be sound in thy statutes, that I be not ashamed."—*Psal.* cxix. 80.

OBSERVE, I. A Description of the Divine Word. II. The Good Man's Desire in reference to them. And, III. The Motive from which this Desire proceeded.

The text presents,

I. *A Description of the Divine word.*

"Thy statutes." Term signifies appointments. Hence, the Bible is God's book of appointments,

1. In reference to moral duties.

Our duty to God—personal duties—relative duties—civil duties—duties to the world at large. Scripture quite specific on every subject obligatory on man.

2. In reference to positive ordinances and institutions.

Public and private worship—hearing the word—baptism—Lord's Supper, &c. No institution can be binding on the conscience of a Christian, unless it be found in God's statutes. To the law and to the testimony, &c. Hence, the Bereans were commended for searching the Scriptures, &c.

3. In reference to articles of faith.

The Bible contains a perfect revelation of those doctrines which are the leading truths of the Christian religion; so that all we have to believe or do, is fully set before us in the word of the Lord. Notice, then,

II. *The Good Man's Desire in reference to them.*

"Let my heart be sound in thy statutes." Soundness of heart in God's statutes includes,

1. That we clearly comprehend them.

That was an important question, "Understandest thou what thou readest?" An ignorant mind is the very opposite of what the Psalmist desired. Soul to be without knowledge is not good. Quite essential that the meaning of the word be plain to the understanding, and clearly received.

2. That we firmly believe them.

Be persuaded of their divinity, importance, and essentiality.

3. That we affectionately love and delight in them.

Love them pre-eminently—prefer them to gold and silver—consider them "sweeter than honey or the honey-comb." That they be our daily delight, our meditation by night, and the constant rejoicing of our hearts, ver. 15, 16, 72.

4. That we constantly practise them.

This is the end of knowledge. "If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them." End of faith; for faith works by love, and produces good fruit. To be sound in them, is to have our principles based upon them, and all our conduct regulated by them. A sound life is the best evidence of a sound heart, "Blessed is he who is a doer of the word," &c.; James i 22. Notice,

III. *The Motive from which this Desire proceeded.*

"That I be not ashamed." That we may not be ashamed,

1. Of human examination.

Our creed may be questioned, our reasons demanded, our views tested. Now, we should be able to give a scriptural reason for all we believe and practise; 1 Peter iii. 15. See also Acts iv. 5, &c. That we may not be ashamed,

2. By being disappointed in our hopes.

If we are unsound in the statutes, we may expect blessings not promised, or in a different way to what they are revealed, our expectations may be cut off, and thus we may be ashamed. That we may not be ashamed,

3. In the hour of trial and affliction.

That our principles and experience may yield us rational and solid support when we most need it. Imperfect views of truth, and a wavering faith, are not comfortable at any time, but least of all when spiritual things must be all our support and joy. That we may not be ashamed,

4. In the final day of scrutiny and decision.

Those only will stand the fiery ordeal whose hearts have been sound in God's

statutes. A name or a profession only will amount to less than nothing, when God shall judge all hearts. Those who have been sound in his statutes, and those only, will stand with joy and confidence before him. The ignorant, unbelieving, and ungodly will be covered with confusion and everlasting contempt.

APPLICATION.

Learn, (1) The invaluable character of the word of God. Contains the words of eternal life. A revelation of Christ the only way, &c., &c. (2) Necessity of a careful perusal of it. Seek ye out of the book of the Lord and read. (3) The importance of our hearts being sound in the glorious truths it reveals.

SKELETON LI.

THE LORD'S PRAYER.

THE INTRODUCTION.

"Our Father which art in heaven."—*Matt.* vi. 9

OBSERVE,

I. *The Being whom we are directed to address.*

The only living and true God, the Father of Jesus Christ. And he possesses all those perfections which render him the fit object of divine worship.

1. He is the Eternal One.

2. He is infinite in power and wisdom. Nothing too difficult or hard for him.

3. He is the only true God. Cannot lie or deceive.

4. He is boundless in benevolence and grace. Too good to be unkind.

5. He is omnipresent. Ever near to hearken and to save.

6. He is omniscient— And knows all things.

7. He is faithful to his word, and immutable in his counsels and perfections.

Observe, also,

II. *His Relative Character.*

"Our Father."

1. The Author of our existence. In him we live; he fashioned us, &c.

2. The Preserver of our being. He preserves us, keeps us alive sustains us, &c.

3 The adopted Father of believers. "Abba, Father;" 1 Pet. i. 3; Gal. iv. 6

4. He is the universal Parent of all mankind.

"Our." "He hath made of one blood all nations of men," &c.; Acts xvii. 26. Hence, all men are united in one fraternal bond. Notice,

III. *His Imperial Habitation.*

"Who art in heaven." Of this place we know but little. It is undoubtedly that glorious world, styled, "the heaven of heavens, highest heavens, the third heavens, paradise, most holy place," the sublimest part of the Divine dominions. We are not to suppose that he is there only, for "the heaven of heavens cannot contain him; he fills heaven and earth; he is everywhere present." But he is in heaven,

1. As his holy habitation. Throne there, train of attendants there, &c.; Isaiah vi. He is there,

2. More gloriously than elsewhere. There are the brightest communications of his glory and perfections. Richest displays of his goodness. Sweetest enjoyments, &c. Fulness of joy—pleasures for evermore. We are directed to address God as "our Father who art in heaven." That we may pray to him,

1. With reverence; Eccl. v. 1.

2. With humility. God regardeth the humble, the lowly, and the contrite; Isa. lvii. 14; Gen. xviii. 27.

3 With confidence in his greatness and all-sufficiency.

4 With heavenly desires and dispositions, &c. To teach us,

5. Chiefly to seek heavenly blessings. "Those things that are above." To contemplate it,

6. As the abode of our spirits and glorified bodies forever. To dwell with God, behold his glory, worship before him, "see him as he is," &c.

APPLICATION.

1. Some do not know God. How lamentable, how wretched such a state; how criminal, when he has so fully revealed himself in nature, providence, his word, and in the person of his Son. 2. Some are haters of God. Dislike his laws, yoke, &c. Who is the Almighty, &c. 3. Some entertain dishonorable views of God Never reflect upon him but as arrayed in vestments of terror—as despotical, &c Only think of his judgments, &c. "God

s love." "He is good to all," &c. "Delighteth in mercy." 4 Some delight in him as their heavenly Father. Love, revere, trust in him, obey him, &c.

SKELETON LII.

THE NAME OF GOD SHOULD BE HALLOWED.

"Hallowed be thy name."—*Matt.* vi. 9

CONSIDER,

I. *The name of God.*

By his name we are to understand,

1. God himself.

1 Kings v. 5. "Give unto God the glory due unto his name;" Psalm xxix. 2; xxxiv. 3; lxi. 5.

2. The titles and perfections of God.

"I am that I am;" Exod. iii. 14. "Jehovah"—"the Lord God, merciful, gracious," &c.; Exod. xxxiv. 6, 7.

II. *The Petition.*

"Hallowed be thy name." To hallow is to sanctify. Same word often thus rendered: see Isaiah viii. 13; xxix 23. Signifies to hold sacred, to reverence, to adore, &c. We may be said to hallow God's name,

1. When we hold it sacred, and never pronounce it but with reverent awe.

This is opposed to all profane uses of it, to a light and inconsiderate use of it. Professors often offend in this. The Jews always paused before and after pronouncing it. God's name is hallowed,

2. When we hold correct views of his character and perfections.

We should not conceive of him as a Being of wrath and terror, nor as a Being of all mercy, nor as a Being indifferent to human actions, &c.; but as the intelligent Ruler of the universe, glorious and perfect in all his attributes, and blessed in all his ways and works.

3. When we act towards him as a Being possessed of these perfections.

Adore his greatness, revere his purity, fear his justice, delight in his mercy and grace, are grateful for his goodness, trust in his truth, &c. We hallow his name,

4. When we set him before us, and make him the end of all our actions.

Act always as in his presence—do all to his glory

5. When we exalt and worship his name in the congregations of his people.

"Come let us worship the Lord, and magnify his name together:" Psal. xxix to the end, xxxiv. 1–3. In this way we condemn idolatry, infidelity, indifference &c. We hallow his name,

6. When we receive and honor his Son.

God has committed all judgment unto him, "that all men should honor the Son, even as they honor the Father." John v 23. Notice,

III. *The Means by which we may promote the Hallowing of God's name.*

1. In ourselves.

By cultivating scriptural views of Deity, by meditation and prayer, by holy fear and watchfulness.

2. In our families.

By teaching our children the fear of the Lord.

3. In the world.

By wise and kind reproof to the profane. By circulating useful publications, especially the Holy Scriptures.

APPLICATION.

1. Let the Christian love and delight in God's name. Exalt it, extol it, glory and trust in it. 2. Let the sinner fear him, dread coming in collision with him, tremble before him, and agree with him quickly, lest he perish by the way, &c.

SKELETON LIII.

THE COMING OF GOD'S KINGDOM, AND UNIVERSAL OBEDIENCE.

"Thy kingdom come: thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven."—*Matt.* vi. 10.

LET US,

I. *Illustrate the Petitions in the Text.*

"Thy kingdom come."

The word "kingdom" is, more plainly reign. The reign of God is of a threefold character.

1. His essential reign.

Over all, in heaven, earth, and hell.

2. His providential reign

Over the earth, and all its inhabitants Upholding all things; surveying, directing and preserving all things, beasts, birds, &c Clothes the grass, &c.

3. His gracious reign

Called the kingdom of heaven, of God, of righteousness, &c. His spiritual empire upon earth. That which is opposed to the reign of sin, and misery, and death. God reigning in the person of his Son. Now, this gracious kingdom is only partially established: its complete and universal spread is desired in the text. When it is answered, millions of Pagans, Mahomedans, and Jews shall know Christ. His name be exalted from the rising to the setting of the sun. Supposed by many, that this will only be effected by the personal appearing of the great God, our Saviour Jesus Christ. It appears evident, that the following things will be essential to the coming of his kingdom:

(1) A door of access must be opened to many countries now closed against the gospel. In China, many millions ignorant of Christ, and the door closed. Turkey, &c. Gospel is smuggled into these places. Way must be broken up, &c.

(2) The number of gospel laborers must be increased manifold. Harvest great, &c. —field, the world—laborers few. Men must be raised up. Thousands of Brainerds, of Careys, of Morrisons, &c., &c., are necessary.

(3) The influences of the Holy Ghost must be copiously poured out. Not by might, &c. Spirit breathed upon the dry bones, &c.—qualified the apostles, &c. Still essential. O for the copious descent! The evangelizing torrent!

Now, the second petition of the text is grounded on the first, and is dependent on its completion. viz.:

"*Thy Will of God may be done in Earth as it is in Heaven.*"

God's will is the appointment of his own mind—that which is agreeable to his own perfections—and which is revealed as the duties of his creatures. This will is done in heaven by all its inhabitants with delightful constancy and perfection. This petition, therefore, includes,

1. That God's will may be known to all in earth.

"God be merciful unto us, and bless us, and cause his face to shine upon us. That thy way may be known upon earth; and thy saving health among all nations;" Psalm lxvii. 1, 2. For so it is in heaven.

2. That God's will be acknowledged and obeyed by all in earth.

Of all classes, countries, climes, colors &c. All men be blessed in Christ, and call him blessed. All know him practically, experimentally, savingly. Every tongue bless, every heart love, every life magnify him. For so it is in heaven.

3. That all on earth may do his will perfectly.

Every thing be holy to the Lord. The people all righteous; and righteous in the highest degree; Zech. xiv. 20, 21. So it is in heaven.

4. That all on earth may do his will constantly.

No intermission; no apostacies. Serve him always, and on all occasions, and in all places. For so it is in heaven.

5. That his will may be done in earth cheerfully and with the greatest delight.

Delight to do his will. Serve the Lord with gladness and singing. Every heart a throne; and every mouth a song. For so it is in heaven.

II. *The Grounds on which we should urge the Petitions of the Text.*

1. On the ground of equity.

The earth is the Lord's; the work of his hands; the theatre of his wondrous works—works of goodness and truth—works of mercy and grace. He has, therefore, an unalienable right to the homage of its inhabitants. It is his right to reign. Satan is an usurper, &c.

2. On the ground of benevolence.

His kingdom is a kingdom of knowledge, righteousness, peace and joy. Where'er he reigns, happiness is diffused, and misery is banished. If we love mankind; if we desire the best interests of undying spirits to be secured; then we shall fervently pray: "Thy kingdom come," &c. It is grounded,

3. On its influence on our happiness.

We cannot seek the glory of God in the extension of his cause, without receiving essential benefit in our own hearts. Besides, is it not highly probable, from the prophecies of revelation, that when Jesus shall have established his kingdom, and shall reign in the midst of it, that he shall bring all his saints with him, so that we may indulge the blessed hope of having a part in the first resurrection, and reign with him forever and ever? "Even so, come Lord Jesus: come quickly. Amen."

SKELETON LIV.

DAILY BREAD.

"Give us, this day, our daily bread."—*Matt.* vi. 11.

CONSIDER in this petition,

I. *The Blessing sought*

Daily bread, &c.

1. Bread.

The staff of life. What God has promised, "Thy bread shall be given," includes, also, all the necessary temporal blessings that we need. No luxuries; they are not necessary—not promised—often injurious—promote pride, wantonness, forgetfulness of God, &c.

2. Bread daily.

Sufficient for our present need. Anxiety about to-morrow forbidden. We may never see it. If we do, we shall have the same source, and the same petition to present.

3. Bread daily as God's gift.

All blessings from God are gifts. We are too poor to remunerate him. Besides, he is too rich to be rewarded. God's blessing makes the toil of the sower successful.

4. Bread daily for us.

Not only for each personally; but for all those united by the same common fraternal bonds of humanity. Let us not forget, that others need these things; and when we seek for ourselves, let us remember them.

Consider,

II. *The Principles on which this Prayer rests.*

It rests,

1. On man's utter helplessness and insufficiency.

What can he do independently of God? All his wisdom, and power, and perseverance could not raise a single grain of corn. In nature, as well as in grace, without God we can do nothing. It rests,

2. On God's sufficiency and beneficence.

He is the fountain of life. "He openeth his hand," &c. "Causeth the grass to grow," &c. He hath both ability and willingness. Good to all; tender mercies over all his works; Psal. ciii., cxlv., cxlvii. It rests,

3. On that sense of dependence we ought always to cultivate.

It is right that we should feel our dependence; humbly confess it; and that we should affectionately trust in God; lean upon, look to him, for every mercy, &c. Whether we possess little or much, his blessing is essential to a right and happy enjoyment of it. Without it, our food may cherish disease, instead of health; kill, instead of sustaining life.

Consider,

III. *The Feelings with which this Petition should be presented.*

With,

1. Sincere conviction of our unworthiness.

We do not deserve the least of his mercies. We have forfeited every claim to his goodness. "It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed."

2. With grateful feelings for past supplies.

"Bless the Lord, O my soul," &c. We should reflect upon past mercies, and keep them before our minds, and be devoutly thankful for them. Praise is both right and comely.

3. With cheerful and full confidence in his goodness.

Trusting in him at all times for every blessing; remembering how he clothes the grass—beautifies the lilies—feeds the ravens, &c. If your parents being evil, &c.

4. With resolution to devote ourselves to his service.

This he demands, expects; and it is our reasonable service. The only return we can give.

APPLICATION.

Let the subject, 1. Produce Confidence in God. 2. Teach us Contentment. And, 3. Induce us to seek the Bread of eternal Life.

SKELETON LV.

FORGIVENESS IMPLORED

"And forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors."—*Matt.* vi. 12.

CONSIDER, I. The Debts. II. The Forgiveness. And, III. The Condition specified.

I. *The Debts.*

We owe to God constant allegiance, love, gratitude, &c. These we shall ever owe to him; and ought not to desire freedom from them. But we are debtors to his justice,

1. As servants or stewards.

Wasted his goods. Misapplied the talents committed to our trust. Health, time, powers of mind, opportunities, mercies, &c.

2. As transgressors of his laws.

Exposed ourselves to the dreadful penalties annexed.

Now, these debts,

(1) Are just. Not oppressive exactions. What God righteously demands.

(2) Great in number. Like mountains, clouds, sand on the sea-shore, hairs of our head.

(3) Constantly increasing. Every year, week, day is adding to the amount.

(4) Expose us to the most dreadful consequences. Wages of sin, death. Cast into prison. No deliverance till the uttermost farthing is paid. That prison, hell.

(5) No created being can discharge us from the consequences of them. Hence it follows, there must be punishment, or,

II. *Forgiveness.*

Now, the blessed Word informs us, that they may be forgiven—all forgiven, freely, fully, and eternally forgiven. Now, observe, sins can be forgiven,

1. Only by God.

"I am he that blotteth out thy transgressions," &c.; Isa. xliii. 25. Our debts must be forgiven,

2. Through the mediation of Christ.

Through this man is preached, &c.; Acts xiii. 38. None other name, &c.; Acts iv. 12. He is the one mediator, &c. —only way to the Father. Redemption through his blood; even forgiveness of sins; Col. i. 14.

3. By repentance and faith.

"Repent and believe the gospel." Repentance, including an entire change of mind; arising from light, conviction, apprehension of danger, &c. And faith, in God's gift, Jesus Christ, who is the true propitiatory, or mercy-seat, where we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need; Mark i. 15; Acts xxvi. 20; John iii. 14, 17; Rom. x. 9.

Notice,

III. *The Condition specified.*

"As we forgive our debtors."

The sense is evidently this: that unless we forgive our debtors, we cannot be forgiven of God. This is further stated, ver. 14, 15: also, Matt. xviii. 21; and is quite express, clear, solemn, absolute. This condition is grounded,

1. On the fitness of things.

None can owe us so much as we owe God; nor be so unworthy of our pardon, as we are of his.

2. Without this our forgiveness would be of no avail to us.

Heart not capable of appreciating it. No genuine fruit; unless we can forgive others. No conformity to God; no fitness for heaven, &c. This condition implies,

3. That we desire of God that which we award to others.

If we are therefore angry, uncharitable, implacable, &c., we desire Deity to be so to us. How fearful would be our condition, if God thus dealt with us! Mark the expression: "*As*" we forgive our debtors.

APPLICATION.

1. How necessary that our debts be forgiven—to our peace—to a good hope—to future salvation! 2. How essential, that we forgive others, freely and fully, as God forgiveth us!

SKELETON LVI

TEMPTATION DEPRECATED

"Lead us not into temptation."—*Matt.* vi. 13

LET us consider,

I. *The Nature of this Petition.*

1. God never tempts men to evil.

Contrary to his holy and benevolent nature; Jas. i. 13. But God may allow his people to be tempted, as in the case of Adam, Joseph, Peter, Paul. Adam and Peter fell; Joseph and Paul triumphed. It is desirable to be exempted from severe temptations. But the right interpretation of the text is,

2. Sore trial.

Word signifies to "*pierce;*" lead us not into piercing trials. God has an undoubted right to try and prove the faith, love and obedience of his people. He sometimes does this,

(1) By demanding extraordinary duties, Abraham to leave his house, country, &c., Moses to forsake the court, &c., of Pharaoh.

(2) By demanding great sacrifices Abraham to offer up his son.

(3) By bringing them through great adversity and affliction, as in Job.

(4) By withholding their desires, and delaying their hopes. See Israelites; Deut. viii. 2. And sometimes,

(5) By causing their cup of plenty to run over—same people: Deut viii 15, 16. Consider,

II. *The Propriety of this Petition.*

To pray for exemption from sore trials, is,

1. Agreeable to the feelings which God has implanted in our nature.

He has made us sensible of the difference between joy and grief, happiness and sorrow, &c.; and he expects, from the principles of our formation, that we should desire the one and be averse to the other. It is agreeable,

2. To Christ's holy example.

He greatly feared, and offered up strong cries and groans, "If it be possible, let this cup," &c.; Heb. v. 7; Matt. xxvi. 39. It is in agreement,

3. With God's own appointment.

He has taught us to flee to him in trouble; to cast all our care upon him; to call upon him; to trust in him, &c. Psal. l. 15. Let us then consider,

III. *The Spirit in which this Petition should be presented.*

With,

1. A deep conviction of our weakness, and the power of our adversaries.

Peter failed here, and was overcome. Without Christ we can do nothing."

2. Sacred resignation to our heavenly Father's pleasure.

We may feel, and pray; but after all refer to him,

"To choose our lot, and regulate our ways."

We must submit ourselves to God, not as we will, but as he may be pleased to appoint. Paul desired the painful thorn to be removed, and prayed thrice; but God allowed it to remain, &c.; 2 Cor. xii. 8.

3. In the exercise of confidence, that God will either deliver us from, or support us in, temptation.

This confidence may be grounded on the divine promises; Christ's intercession; and the examples of his people in all ages; Gen. xv. 1, Isai. xli. 10.

APPLICATION.

(1) The people of God may expect sore trials. (2) God is their only defence. And, (3) Believing prayer their only remedy.

SKELETON LVII.

DELIVERANCE FROM EVIL.

"Deliver us from evil"—*Matt.* vi. 13.

It is highly probable that this petition especially applies to the preservation of the child of God from the power of the devil, who goeth about seeking whom he may devour

We shall apply this petition, however I. To the Evil One. II. To this evil World. III. To our evil Hearts; and, IV. To the Evil of future Misery.

Then in this petition we may seek,

I. *Deliverance from the Evil One.*

Satan is evil in the deepest degree, he is opposed to all that is holy and benevolent in the character and works of God; he is a foul, polluted, dark, malignant spirit. He is a liar and a murderer from the beginning; saints are exposed to two sources of danger:—

1. From his wiles.

Thus Eve, and thousands besides—he tries to deceive, allure, &c.—his subtlety and craft eminently fit him for this—Judas

2. From his fierce attacks.

Hence we read of the "fiery darts of the devil." He is compared to the deadly serpent—roaring lion, &c. His horrid temptations are likened to a "flood;" Isai lix. 19. Now we require deliverance from the Evil One—we need the help of God, wisdom and prudence from above, the power of the Most High. God must be our shield; he alone can deliver us, &c.

The petition of the text may apply,

II. *To this evil World.*

Satan is called the god of this world, here he has his empire, and millions of willing subjects; his empires opposed to God's kingdom in the world; they are at utter and interminable variance. The world is a scene of danger to the Christian. Christ was well aware of it; and therefore prayed that they might be kept from it, &c.; John xvii. 15. This petition implies that they may be delivered from,

1. Its evil maxims and principles.

"Ye are not of the world."

2. Its evil spirit and customs.

"Be not conformed," &c.

3. Its evil associates and practices.

"Come out from among hem," &c "May be kept unspotted," &c. 'Have the victory over it." "Tread it under

their feet," &c. "Crucified to the world," &c.

This petition may include,

III. *Deliverance from the Evil of our own Hearts.*

"The heart is deceitful above all things," &c. "Flesh lusteth and warreth against the spirit," &c.—constant conflict; Christian not sufficient in his own might to overcome it; the grace and power of God necessary; spiritual light to discern, and spiritual strength to overcome it; blood of Christ to cleanse it, &c. How very desirable that the heart be filled with heavenly love, and that the peace of God which passeth all understanding, keep it always by Christ Jesus: sanctified wholly, &c.; 1 Thess. v. 23; Ezek. xxxix. 25, &c.

The petition may include,

IV. *Deliverance from the evil of Future Misery.*

In hell there is misery unmixed—unceasing—eternal. This will be the portion of the wicked and ungodly, who despise divine mercy, and reject the gospel of Christ. How anxious we ought to be, to be completely delivered from the sentence and the fear of the wrath to come; guilt removed; pollution cleansed; and a title and meetness to eternal life procured. God can deliver us; desires to do so; and if we trust to his merciful provisions as revealed in the gospel, he will assuredly save into his eternal kingdom and glory.

APPLICATION.

(1) Cultivate a lively sense of the danger to which we are exposed. (2) By fervent believing, and constant prayer, seek deliverance from them.

SKELETON LVIII.

FOR THE LAST DAY OF THE YEAR.

"Who are all of us here alive this day."—*Deut.* v. 3.

It is highly proper on particular occasions to take a retrospect of our history, and he dealings of God with us. The architect often does this during the rising of the structure he is erecting. The teacher does this, in the annual examinations of his pupils. The mariner does this in consulting his log-book. And the merchant does this, when he yearly takes his stock &c. How proper that the Christian should do it! The last day of the year seems a suitable period for it, and the text presents a very appropriate subject for meditation: "Who are all of us here alive this day."

I. *This Text applies to many this Day to whom it was not applicable last Year*

Thousands have been born in the course of this year. Many of these will die in infancy; some we fear will live to be the bane of society. Many we trust will rise up to call God blessed. Let parents see to it that they train them up religiously in the fear of God; knowledge of Scriptures, &c.

II. *The Text applied to many last year to whom it is not now applicable.*

They were then alive, but now they are inhabitants of the tomb, and their souls have entered the eternal state.

Of these, many classes might be specified.

1. Some who were expecting it.

Aged, infirm, afflicted, &c., who were daily waiting their dismissal, &c.

2. Some who were reckoning on many years to come.

Young, healthy, &c.; bones full of marrow, and breasts full of milk, and hearts full of life; but they perished as the flower. "Their sun went down while it was yet day."

3. Some, we fear, died unprepared.

Aliens to God; strangers to repentance, faith, and holiness.

4. Many, we trust, died in the Lord.

Race ended; goal reached; warfare accomplished; crown received; forever with the Lord.

III. *The Text is applicable to all those now assembled.*

"We are all alive here this day."

1. And it is wonderful that we are so.

Amidst so many dangers, diseases, and death; thread so brittle, yet sustaining us: how amazing it is,

> "That a harp of a thousand strings
> Should keep in tune so long!"

This is the more surprising, as many of you are sickly, weak, aged, &c.; some perhaps have been at the gates of death, yet brought back again. Our being alive,

2. Is entirely owing to the goodness and patience of God.

It is not because we deserve it or are

worthy of it, but because God delights to spare, and exercise his mercy towards us. His goodness gave us existence, and by its continuance our existence is perpetuated.

3. We are alive under increasing responsibilities.

Many privileges and blessings have been given to us this year, for all of which we must give an account; talents, time, opportunities, sabbaths, sermons, &c.

4. Being alive should fill us with hearty gratitude to God.

Our lips, hearts, and lives should show forth his praise. "What shall we render," &c. "Bless the Lord," &c. "O come, let us bless the Lord," &c. Let us erect an annual stone as a memorial, and inscribe upon it, "Eben-ezer."

5. As we are alive, let us now resolve to live more than ever to God, and for eternity.

Awake to diligence, zeal, and devotedness to the cause of personal religion, and in efforts to glorify God and to do good to men.

IV. *It is highly probable that the Text is now applicable to some here for the last time.*

We shall not be surprised if some be removed by death before the end of next year. Let this idea fill us with seriousness; induce us to examine ourselves, and to be also ready for the coming of the Son of Man.

APPLICATION.

Careless man, be thoughtful; worldling, seek those things which are above; formalist, be devout; half-hearted, be decided; Christians, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace.

O that each from his Lord, may receive the glad word,
"Well and faithfully done!"
Enter into his joy, and sit down on his throne

SKELETON LIX.

CHRIST ALL AND IN ALL.

"But Christ is all and in all."—*Colos.* iii. 11

CHRIST is all and in all,

I. *In the Works of Creation.*

"The world was made by him." "By whom also he made the worlds;" Heb. i. 2. Made also "*for him.*" John i. 1–10 Colos. i. 15; Rev. iv. 11.

II. *In the Arrangements of Providence.*

"By him all things consist;" Col. i. 17. "He is Lord of all." "All things are given into his hands." "Upholdeth all things by the word of his power;" Heb. i. 3. "He has all power both in heaven and earth." He is all in all,

III. *In the Scheme of Redemption.*

In his love it originated—his wisdom designed the plan, his arm executed it—he became our kinsman and surety—paid the price—was made a sin-offering for us—his life magnified the law—his blood-shedding redeemed us to God; Rev. i. 5.

IV. *In the Oracles of Truth.*

He is the treasure hid in the field of revelation. His glory gilds the sacred page. Moses and the prophets testified of Christ. Centre where all the lines of the Scriptures meet. Law, ceremonies, prophecies, all refer to him. New Testament, the history of his life, mission, work, kingdom, &c.

V. *In the Ordinances of the Gospel.*

He is all in all in,

1. Preaching.

"We preach Christ," &c. Christ the sum, substance, and end of preaching.

2. Baptism.

His example, authority, mode of administration, signification, &c., all refer to him.

3. Lord's Supper.

Appointed by him. Elements symbolical of his flesh and blood. To be observed in memory of his death, till he come. He is all and in all,

VI. *In the Privileges and Blessings of Believers.*

1. In justification.

"Justified by his grace." "By faith in his name." "Justified from all things," &c.

2. In adoption.

"To as many as received him," &c., John i. 12.

3. In sanctification and holiness.

"Blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin." "Made unto us wisdom, righteousness, and sanctification," &c.

4. In peace and happiness.

"Peace with God through Jesus Christ." "He is our peace." "My peace I give," &c.

5. In preservation, &c.

"My sheep shall never perish, neither

shall any pluck them out of my hands." "Author and finisher of faith." "He who hath begun the good work," &c. He is all and in all,

VII. *In all Christian Graces.*

1. Faith.

He is the object and author of it.

2. Hope.

Our hope, "Christ in you the hope of glory." "Hope of Israel." Begotten again to a lively hope," &c.

3. Love.

"We love him, because he first loved us." It is "his love shed abroad in our hearts.'

VIII. *In all New Testament Duties.*

He is the Christian lawgiver. His word the rule—his example the copy—his grace the means—his glory the end. He is all and in all,

IX. *In all the Expectations of his Saints.*

Do they expect,

1. A happy death.

His presence must cheer, they must die *in him.* "O death," &c. Victory through Jesus Christ.

2. A glorious resurrection.

He will raise at his second coming, by his own power, in likeness of his own glorious body.

3. Blessed entrance into heaven.

He will judge, and pronounce the welcome. "Come, ye blessed," &c.

4. Eternal life.

"Because I live, ye shall live also."

APPLICATION.

1. Let his saints live to him. 2. Converse of him. 3. Glorify his name. 4. Trust always in him. 5. Prepare to meet him with joy, &c.

SKELETON LX.

THE HEART FIXED

'My heart is fixed, O God! my heart is fixed."—*Psalm* lvii. 7

In the Divine Word, we read of those whose hearts are deceived, and of those whose hearts are undecided. In the text the Psalmist expresses the state of his own heart. Appealing to God, he exclaims, "My heart is fixed, O God! my heart is fixed'" Let us, then endeavor to ascertain on what the heart of the good man is fixed.

The heart of the good man is fixed,

I. *Upon the Blessed God as the Object of supreme Affection and Worship.*

"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart," &c. God is the only portion of the Christian. He delights in God. Finds his all in God. "Whom have I in heaven but thee," &c. God occupies the throne of the affections, and receives the undivided homage of the mind. As such, praise and prayer will ever be offered to him, and to him only. The heart must be fixed,

II. *Upon Christ's Person and Work for Acceptance and Salvation.*

Christ will have the entire and unbroken confidence of the soul. On him the soul will rest as the only foundation. To him look as the only remedy. Into him run as the only refuge. His merits plead, and his only, at the throne of grace. "To whom shall we go," &c. "Salvation in none other." He is "all and in all," &c. The heart will be fixed,

III. *Upon the Holy Spirit as the only Source of Life and Consolation.*

All spiritual life is produced by the Spirit. "It is the Spirit that quickeneth." The life of God in the soul is carried on by the same blessed Agent. From him also all spiritual comfort flows. It is by believing and having the heart fixed upon him, that we enjoy all his holy and consoling influences. He must dwell within us, strengthen us, and in our duties assist, or life and happiness cannot be perpetuated. The heart must be fixed,

IV. *Upon the divinely inspired Oracles as our only Rule of Faith and Practice.*

The Scriptures are our only infallible guide. "To the law and to the testimony," &c. Other works may be excellent and useful—the Bible is divine, and its truths essential and saving. We must consult the Holy Oracles on all matters relating to duty or privilege. All its declarations must be affectionately and freely received. It must be our closet book—our family book—our church book; and we must let the "word of Christ dwell in us richly in all wisdom," &c. The heart must be fixed,

V. *Upon the People of God as our Chief Companions and Friends.*

"I am a companion of all them that fear

God," &c The primitive Christians first gave themselves to the Lord, then to his people. We are to do good unto all men, but especially to the household of faith. These we are to make our confidants; with them we are chiefly to associate, and we are to love them with fervency and affection, and to delight in them as those with whom we shall dwell forever. Our hearts must be fixed,

VI. *On Heaven as our Future and Eternal Home.*

Here we are strangers and pilgrims. This is not our rest. Here we have no continuing city. "Now they desired a better country," &c. Our expectations must refer to heaven. Our desires and prayers to heaven. Our struggles and conflicts to heaven. Believers are born for heaven, bound for heaven; and when they die, "an abundant entrance shall be ministered unto them," &c. How happy, how safe the Christian, who can adopt the text as the experience of his soul, and say, "My heart is fixed, O God! my heart is fixed!"

SKETCH XLI.

THE IMPORTANCE OF GIVING GLORY TO GOD.

Give glory to the Lord your God, before he cause darkness."—*Jer.* xiii. 16.

THE prophet had just been describing the calamities which God had declared he would bring upon his rebellious people; and he exhorts them to hear what the Lord had spoken, and not, in the pride of their hearts, to reject the counsel of God. He then prescribes a remedy by which the judgments of God might be averted, and that remedy is specified in the text, "Give glory to the Lord your God, before he cause darkness." The text is capable of a personal application. Let us, then, consider,

I. *The Important Counsel which is given.*

"Give glory to the Lord your God." The subject cannot refer to God's essential glory, as that is incapable of increase or diminution, and cannot possibly be affected by any of his creatures. Jehovah dwells in light, which nothing can becloud—in serenity, which nothing can disturb. But, his glory may be declared, acknowledged, exhibited. All nature reflects heavens declare the glory of God." The bright intelligences who ever minister before him, are constantly celebrating it; and it is the imperative duty, as well as the highest privilege, that man should unite in this holy and reasonable employment. We should give glory to the Lord our God,

1. By a verbal and practical acknowledgment of his being.

"The fool hath said in his heart, there is no God." Wicked, unbelieving men, live *without* God in the world. It becomes us, therefore, to confess that "the Lord is God." And not only are we to affirm this, and thus glorify God with our mouths, but we must show forth this belief in our lives, by always setting the Lord before us. We should give glory to God,

2. By cultivating right views of his character and perfections.

It is of the utmost importance to have correct views of God. Many imagine God to be such an one as themselves; many speak of him as being careless of the creatures he hath made: some represent him as constantly clothed in habiliments of wrath and terror; others describe him as indifferent to the interests of holiness, as absorbed in mercy, and heedless of the rights of equity and truth. God hath described his own character, and revealed his own perfections; let that be our standard: "And the Lord passed by before him, and proclaimed, The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth; keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty;" Exod. xxxiv. 6. We should give glory to God,

3. By a humble and contrite confession of our sins before him.

God invites us to confess our sins that we may obtain mercy; and in sincere, humble, contrite confession, we give glory to his justice, whose claims we have violated—to his holiness, which we have insulted—to his patience and goodness, which we have despised—and to his mercy and forgiving love, which we now with brokenness of heart implore. We should give glory to God,

4. By a cordial reception of his own terms of reconciliation.

He has graciously provided for the restoration of fallen miserable sinners. He says unto them, "Return unto me, for I

have redeemed you." He hath appointed his own Son to be the Mediator between himself and us. In the person and work of Christ, he is well pleased; and, by faith in his sacrificial death, the sinner is freely justified, and accepted of God. God, therefore, commands the sinner to repent and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and God is glorified when we believe the record he hath given of his Son; 1 John v. 9–13. We should give glory to the Lord our God,

5. By a sacred consecration of ourselves to his service.

Yes, God is honored when the rebel throws away his weapons of hostility, and becomes a devoted subject to the crown of heaven. When there is a free and hearty surrender of body and soul to his service; when lip, and head, and hand, and heart, and influence are all cheerfully surrendered to him. When the soul with happy delight exclaims,

> "Were the whole realm of nature mine,
> That were a present far too small.
> Love so amazing, so divine,
> Demands my life, my soul, my all."

Observe,

II. *The Solemn Motive by which this Counsel is enforced.*

"Before he cause darkness." God says, by his prophet, "I form light, and create darkness." It is evident, that the word darkness is used metaphorically in the text, and refers to those national calamities which are threatened in the chapter; see verses 14, 16, 19, and 24. The term is variously employed in the sacred writings, and sometimes includes,

1. Temporal visitations of divine displeasure.

Thus, it is employed nationally by Isaiah, viii. 22; Joel, ii. 2, and in the text. Also Ezek. xxxii. 8. When God visits a nation with war or famine, or pestilence, then it is a time of darkness. When families or individuals are subjected to privations and adversity, plans disconcerted, hopes blighted, disappointments reaped, &c., then it may be said to be a time of darkness; and how easily God can effect this—how easily touch our arrangements, and utterly frustrate them—how easily can he cause us to drink of the cup of perplexity, and confusion, and sorrow!

2. Bodily and mental afflictions are seasons of darkness.

Health, and its consequences, resemble the bright cheering day; afflictions, and their effects, the gloom and blackness of night. And how quickly God can give us sickness in exchange for health—weakness instead of strength—pain instead of ease, darkness instead of light! How easily can he quench the light of reason, and leave us to wander with the vacant stare of the maniac! Then, how desirable that we should give glory to God, and avoid a calamity so truly overwhelming and terrific!

3. Divine abandonment is darkness.

God is light, and where his favorable presence is, is heaven; the withdrawment of it is darkness, is hell. He said of old, that his "Spirit should not always strive with man." He speaks of Ephraim, and says, "He is joined to his idols, let him alone." Saul's bitterest wo was expressed, when he said, "God is departed from me;' 1 Sam. xxviii. 15. O, how dreadful to be left to our own infatuation, for God to take his Holy Spirit from us! Then, "Give glory to God, before he thus cause darkness."

4. The grave is the region of darkness.

Job says of it, "a land of darkness as darkness itself, and of the shadow of death, without any order, and where the light is as darkness;" Job x. 22. The rays of the natural or of the divine sun, never shine there. There is neither work nor device; all is undisturbed stillness, and sable gloom. No gospel, no ordinances, no strivings of the Spirit, no means of repentance or salvation. There, the bodies of men remain in custody, awaiting the trumpet's blast, when they shall be brought forth either to glory or everlasting contempt. Then, let us give glory to God, before he cause us to go the way of all the earth, and surround us with the darkness of that house appointed for all living.

5. Hell is the place of outer darkness.

There dwell the spirits of darkness—there are chains of darkness—there is the blackness of eternal darkness. And God hath said that "the wicked shall be turned into hell." That all "whose names are not written in the book of life, shall be cast into the lake of fire, the second death;" Matt. viii. 12; xxii. 13; xxv. 30; Jude 6 13. Then give glory to God, before he cause you to go down to the doleful region of eternal blackness and despair.

APPLICATION.

1. Let the subject be urged upon the attention of all Upon the young and old, the rich and poor, the moral and profane. God demands glory from all men. None are too elevated to be exempted from it; none are too low to yield it.

2. Give glory to God now. He claims it now, he will receive it now, you may derive the advantages now. If refused at present, the day of opportunities may cease, he may cause darkness when compliance will be impossible.

3. Give glory to God in all things and at all times. "Whether ye eat or drink," &c. Glorify him with body and soul. "In all your ways acknowledge him," &c.

SKETCH XLII.

MORAL AND TYPICAL CHARACTER OF MOSES.

"I will raise them up a prophet from among their brethren, like unto me."—*Deut.* xviii. 18.

Moses was one of the most distinguished servants of God that ever lived. Whether you contemplate him as the first inspired penman of the Scriptures, as the deliverer of Israel, or as a legislator and prophet, this declaration will be fully and abundantly established. His life is associated with some of the most astonishing events recorded in the history of the world, and even the celestial choir unite his name with Christ's in their commemorative anthems of praise, and "sing the song of Moses and the Lamb;" Rev. xv. 3. Our present design is to consider him,

I. *In his moral excellencies*, and II. *As an illustrious type of the Lord Jesus Christ.* Let us, then, consider Moses,

I. *In his moral Excellencies.*

Among these, and as the groundwork of the rest, we must notice,

1. His vigorous faith in the declarations of God.

The first religious step he took in life, is attributed to faith. "By faith, Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter;" Heb. xi. 24, &c. He believed what God had spoken to Abraham and the fathers respecting Israel. And this faith induced him to prefer reproach and suffering with them, rather than enjoy the pomp and riches, and pleasures of the court of Egypt. Notice,

2. His cheerful obedience to the commands of God.

He did, indeed, hesitate and object when God called him to his high office, but that was entirely from a sense of his insufficiency for the great work. When these doubts were removed, then how earnestly and assiduously did he devote himself to the service of God! After his decease, God, speaking of him to Joshua, said, "Moses, my servant, is dead;" Josh. i. 2: and again, declared concerning him, that "he was faithful in all his house;" Num. xii. 7. What an eulogium, and that, too, from God, who searcheth the hearts and trieth the reins of the children of men!

3. He was distinguished for a spirit of fervent devotion.

He was eminently a man of prayer. This was the atmosphere he breathed. In all his difficulties and dangers, he had recourse to prayer. It is unnecessary to select instances, for all he wrought in reference to Israel was identified with prayer.

4. He was distinguished for enlarged and unwearied benevolence.

He not only believed in, and loved God, but his soul burned with love to the human race. How he toiled for the welfare of his countrymen according to the flesh! How he pitied and bore with their weaknesses; what compassion he displayed in reference to their infirmities; and how often did his benevolent intercessions save them from perishing as monuments of the divine displeasure! One signal instance is exhibited; Exod. xxxii. 30.

5. He was celebrated for astonishing meekness.

Amidst all the provocations to which he was subjected, he was cool and unmoved; and in passing through the most painful and trying situations, never did he lose the mastery over his own spirit, except once, at the waters of Zin; Num. xx. 10. It is said of him, "that he was meek above all the men upon the face of the earth;" Num. xii. 3.

6. His religion was characterized by its constancy and perseverance.

He displayed his piety when he was come to years, when he forsook the palace of Egypt. He displayed it in every succeeding stage of his long, laborious, and useful life; and he concluded it by address-

ing to them all the words that God spake concerning them; Deut. xxxi., xxxii., and xxxiii. And then, according to the word of the Lord, he went up to the top of Pisgah, and died there; Deut. xxxiv. 1–5. Let us consider Moses,

II. *As an illustrious Type of the Lord Jesus Christ.*

In doing this it will be necessary to make a selection of the more prominent points in which he typified Christ. Observe,

1. The wonderful preservation of both in infancy

The edicts of Pharaoh and Herod. The interposition of God, and divine protection of both; Exod. i. 22, &c.; ii. 3, &c.; Matt. ii. 12, &c.

2. The intellectual qualifications of both.

Moses was learned in all the learning of the Egyptians, and Christ possessed all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. See him in the temple at twelve years of age; Luke ii. 46.

3. The voluntary poverty and reproach of both.

Moses, in despising the treasures and dignities of Egypt. Jesus, though rich in all celestial riches and glory, yet became poor, yea, the servant of servants, and "was obedient even unto death;" Phil. ii. 6

4. In the offices which both sustained.

Both prophets, both deliverers, both leaders of the people, both the founders of new religious dispensations.

5. In the signs and miracles which they wrought.

Moses in Egypt and in the desert; Jesus in the streets and villages of Judea; with this difference, many of those by Moses were terrific, while all Christ's were miracles of mercy and compassion

6. Both fasted forty days and forty nights. Exod. xxxiv. 28; Matt. iv. 2.

7. Moses appointed seventy rulers over the people, and sent twelve men to search out the good land.

Christ called seventy disciples, and appointed twelve to be the apostles of his kingdom.

8. Moses revealed the will of God, and the law came by him.

Christ fully declared the mind of his Father, and grace and truth came by him; John i. 18.

9. Moses gave the people water from the rock, and procured them angels' food

Christ himself was that *rock*, and he was the true heavenly bread; John vi. 35.

10. Moses was envied, and suffered much from his countrymen.

Christ came to his own, but they received him not, but reviled him, and out of envy put him to a painful and ignominious death, Acts ii. 23.

11. Moses was celebrated for his meekness, devotion, zeal, and constancy in God's service

Jesus was holy, harmless, and separate from sinners. In him the law was embodied; he was the ten commandments alive; Heb. vii. 26.

12. Moses instituted the passover.

Christ his own paschal supper, and he is the true "passover sacrificed for us;" Matt. xxvi. 17; 1 Cor. v. 7.

13. Moses died before the people entered into the promised rest.

It behooved Christ to die, and to rise again, that remission of sins might be preached, and that sinful men might obtain a title and meetness for eternal life; Luke xxiv. 46.

14. Moses retired according to God's command, to a mountain; in perfect vigor of mind and health of body, and died there.

Jesus, by the will of his heavenly Father, ascended the hill of Calvary, and there surrendered his spirit into his hands. There are many other traits of likeness between Moses and Jesus, but the above must suffice. In many things there was a great disparity between them.

(1) Moses was a frail man, he had his infirmities. Jesus was free from all sin, and guile was never found in his mouth.

(2) Moses was a servant; Jesus a son.

(3) Moses received power from God to do the works he did; Jesus possessed all power both in heaven and earth.

(4) The spirit of prophecy dwelt largely in Moses, but wholly in Christ.

(5) Moses was a leader, but Christ a Saviour.

(6) The rewards Moses principally offered were temporal; Christ's spiritual and eternal.

(7) Moses established a perishing economy, one that waxed old, and is now abrogated. Christ's kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and of his rule there shall be no end.

APPLICATION.

1 We may admire Moses; but Jesus demands our supreme love.

2. We may read the law of Moses, but believe and trust in the gospel of Christ.

3. It is well to contemplate the moral excellencies and official engagements of Moses; but it is better to meditate upon the scene on the holy mount of transfiguration, where Moses and Elias both do homage to Jesus, and conversed of his decease, which he was to accomplish at Jerusalem, and where the voice from the excellent glory was heard, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased, *Hear ye him.*"

SKETCH XLIII.

THE GRACE OF GOD IN BRINGING SALVATION TO ALL MEN.

"For the grace of God that bringeth salvation, hath appeared unto all men." &c.—*Titus* ii. 11, 12.

THIS epistle is full of practical directions. Bishops are instructed in ch. i. ver. 5–10. Aged men and aged women, ch. ii. 2–5. Young men, ver. 6–8. And Servants, ver. 9, 10. Then the apostle enforces the whole by exhibiting the original cause and great end of the gospel; "For the grace of God," &c.

In the text we have the *Origin, the Extent, and the Influence of Salvation.*

Notice in the text,

I. *The Origin of Salvation.*

"The grace of God, that bringeth salvation." Salvation is a most comprehensive term, including the whole of that great scheme, by which God hath redeemed unto himself the fallen posterity of Adam. It includes the application of that scheme to the soul of man in his justification, regeneration, and complete sanctification in this life. And it includes the consummation of the whole in the gift of eternal life.

Now this salvation is the result of grace, that is, of the sovereign goodness and unmerited clemency and favor of God. This must be evident if we consider,

1. That man did not deserve it.

He had no lawful claim. He could refer to no equitable grounds of right or title to it. He was a rebel, a transgressor, and as such was justly exposed to the infliction of the threatened penalty of death.

2. It was unsolicited.

Man never sought God. He never presented any petition, never urged any plea. He shed no tears of contrition. He expressed no bitter regret. He manifested no signs of repentance. He displayed no solicitude about salvation.

3. Then it was entirely the result of divine grace.

God beheld him, pitied him, and mercy condescended to interpose in his behalf "God so loved the world," &c.

The grace of God,

(1) Made all the arrangements necessary for salvation. Devised the astounding plan. Fixed upon the means, time, &c. The grace of God,

(2) Brought the author of salvation. "Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ," &c.; 2 Cor. viii. 9.

(3) It brought the message of salvation. Gospel is emphatically the gospel of the grace of God; Acts xx. 24.

(4) It brings the application of salvation to the soul. We are called by his grace—justified freely by his grace—sanctified by his grace—kept and preserved by his grace—and the topstone is brought on, amid ascriptions of "Grace, grace unto it." Notice,

II. *The Extent of Salvation.*

"It hath appeared unto all men." Or rather, "The grace of God that bringeth *salvation to all men*, hath appeared." Before the end of the Christian era, no doubt, the grace of God will appear, by the preaching of the gospel, to all men. But the other reading was ever true, and ever will be so, that the grace of God hath brought salvation to all men. This will appear if we consult,

1. Those passages which refer to the mercy and love of God to all men.

"His tender mercies are over all his works." "God so loved the world," John iii. 14–17.

2. Those passages which speak of Christ as the Saviour.

"The Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world." "Who tasted death for every man." "He is the propitiation, not only for our sins, but for the sins of the whole world," 1 John ii. 2.

3. Those passages which offer salvation to all men

The gospe is to be preached to all the world, 1 John ii. 2, to every creature. God "would have all men to be saved, and come unto the knowledge of the truth." "Christ is the Saviour of all men, especially of them that believe." All are exhorted to repent and believe the gospel. And Christ says, "Him that cometh unto me I will in nowise cast out," 1 Tim. ii. 4–6; iv. 10; John vi. 37.

The grace of God bringeth salvation,

(1) To all classes and degrees of men. To the rich and the poor; noble and ignoble; monarch and the peasant; the ruler and the slave.

(2) To men of all grades of moral guilt. It includes the moralist, and excludes not the profane. It will save the Pharisee and the publican; the decent and the degraded; the formalist and the skeptic. "All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven," &c. The thousand as well as the hundred pence debtor.

(3) Men of all ages. It despises not the child; it warmly embraces the young. It receives the middle-aged, and rejects not the old hoary-headed transgressor. In short, it treats with man as a sinner, helpless and perishing, but as redeemed by Christ. And no exception is made to country, or color, or tongue; but whosoever believingly calls upon the name of the Lord Jesus Christ shall be saved. Consider,

III. *The Influence of Salvation on the moral Character of Man.*

"Teaching us that denying ungodliness," &c. The salvation of the gospel is a salvation from the dominion and love, as well as from the future effects of sin. Hence it teaches and enforces the necessity,

1. Of the abandonment of ungodliness and worldly lusts.

It withdraws the mind from all that is unlike or opposed to God, and from a sinful desire after the pleasures or riches of this world. This evil course is forsaken and verbally and practically denied. It enforces,

2. Sobriety of conduct,

In meats, drinks, recreations, speech, temper, &c. Moderation in all things, using this world and not abusing it.

3. Righteousness of life.

Love of justice. Equity in all transactions. The adoption of the golden rule, as the unvarying test in all our dealings with our fellow-men It teaches,

4. Godliness of heart.

Supreme love to God; universal obedience to God; and constant delight in God. Godliness includes the transformation of the soul into the Divine likeness, into which we are changed from glory to glory by the Spirit of the Lord. The grace of God produces sobriety, or self-government, in reference to ourselves; righteousness, in reference to mankind; and godliness, in reference to the Supreme Being.

APPLICATION.

1. How we should rejoice in the riches and fulness of Divine grace.

2. How necessary that we cordially receive the invaluable boon it presents

3. And how important that we practically exemplify the moral lessons it communicates.

SKETCH XLIV.

CONCEALMENT OF CHRIST. IMPOSSIBLE.

"But he could not be hid."—*Mark* vii. 24.

Jesus had been toiling all day in his heavenly avocation of teaching the people when he arose and went into the borders of Tyre and Sidon, and entered into a house, where wearied and fatigued nature might have repose, and therefore he would have no one know that he was there. But the text informs us that "He could not be hid."

I. *We observe that Christ Jesus never has been hid.*

A reference to six distinct periods of our world's history will establish this fact We refer,

1. To the age immediately succeeding the fall.

To our first parents Christ was revealed as the woman's seed, who should bruise the serpent's head. And there can be no doubt that Abel's sacrifice had direct respect to the Messiah thus promised, Gen iii. 15; iv. 1; Heb. xi. 4.

We refer,

2. To the patriarchal age.

And here we have still more abundant evidence, that Christ was not hid. God expressly revealed him to Abraham and he saw Christ's day, and was glad. John

viii. 56. Jacob wrestled with him, and obtained the blessing. And all their altars, and sacrifices, and services, were designed to keep alive their expectation of the true and great sacrifice which would be offered up in the end of the world once for all.

3. In the Mosaic or Levitical age Christ was not hid.

All the arrangements of that economy pointed out and distinctly referred to Christ. Sacrifices, offerings, and the tabernacle with all its furniture. And the priests with their garments and breastplates, &c., all pointed to the great High Priest of our profession, Gal. iii. 16–29; Heb. ix. and x.

4. We refer to the prophetical age.

And here Christ was still more fully revealed. His person, work, sufferings, and glory were all specifically predicted. "To him gave all the prophets witness," Acts x. 43; Luke xviii. 31. He was David's king and Lord. Isaiah's Immanuel, Light of the Gentiles, and Glory of Israel. Ezekiel's Shepherd, and Plant of Renown. Daniel's Messiah, the Prince. Micah's Ruler. Zechariah's Jehovah's Fellow; and Malachi's Refiner, and Sun of Righteousness. Jesus was the centre of their predictions, "For the testimony of Jesus is the Spirit of prophecy," Rev. xix. 10.

We refer,

5. To the time of his personal appearance, and residence in our world.

John was his public herald and harbinger. His baptism and acknowledgment of the Father and anointing were all public. His teaching and his miracles were not concealed. The healed testified of him. Devils testified of him. The tempest and the storm testified of him. The rocks and graves, the rent veil, and the darkened sun, all testified of him. In short, "He could not be hid." We refer,

6. To the era commencing with the day of Pentecost, and extending to the present period.

Being qualified with the influences of the Holy Ghost, the apostles went and preached Christ everywhere; and the name of Christ, and the cause of Christ, despite of all the attacks of Pagans, Mahomedans, and Jews, have been made known and exalted in the sight of all nations. And now thousands of his servants, in almost every language and tongue, are preaching the unsearchable riches of Christ.

Notice.

II. *That Christ never shall be hid.*

We infer this,

1. From the history of the past.

It is impossible to conceive of more malignant or concentrated efforts employed against him, than what have been employed, and yet he has not been hid. His ancient enemies have long since mouldered with the dust, and all his future enemies shall inevitably share the same doom.

We infer this,

2. From the express declarations and promises of the Father.

"He is to have the heathen for his inheritance." "All nations are to serve him," and "all his foes shall lick the dust." "He is to sit on his Father's right hand, until his enemies are made his footstool." Ps. lxxii. 9; Isai. liii. 10; Ezek. xxi. 27, Dan. vii. 14; Heb. i. 13

We infer this,

3. From his own right, power and glory.

He created all things for himself. He upholds all things. He has redeemed the world. His kingdom therefore it is, by right; and he has power, and it will be his glory, to subdue all things unto himself. His title is "King of kings and Lord of lords." We notice,

III. *That Christ ought not to be hid.*

1. He ought not to be hid by his ministering servants.

It is their calling to publish Christ. To lift him up. To point the world to his cross.

> "'Tis all their business here below
> To cry, 'Behold the Lamb!'"

In all things "He must have the pre-eminence."

2. He ought not to be hid by his collective body the church.

The church is to be clothed with him. To exhibit him in all his ordinances. To exhibit him by obedient homage to his laws. By referring all the authority, and giving all the glory to him, "Who is head over all things to his church."

3. He ought not to be hid by individual believers.

They are to be "His witnesses;" his confessors; "living epistles." To hide Christ is to dishonor him; to offend the Father; to grieve the Spirit; to bring ourselves under that solemn declaration, "Of

him will the Son of Man also be ashamed when he shall come in his own glory, and he Father's, and the holy angels." Luke ix. 26.

APPLICATION.

1. Let Zion's sons rejoice in a revealed Saviour. A Redeemer so great, so glorious, so precious.

2. Let sinners believingly behold the Lamb of God, and thus obtain justification, peace, and a good hope of eternal life.

3. Let the impenitent not forget, however they may reject him now, that when he makes his second advent, he will be visible to all, both friends and foes. "For every eye shall see him," &c.

SKETCH XLV

A VISIT TO THE TOMB OF CHRIST

"Come, see the place where the Lord lay."—*Matt.* xxviii. 6.

ANGELS have often been employed in communicating important tidings to man. They often appeared to the patriarchs; conveyed intelligence to the prophets; announced the birth of the Saviour; directed his escape into Egypt; ministered to him in the desert; and doubtless watched with intense interest the events of the cross; and were the first to gladden the hearts of the devoted women, the friends of Jesus, by the cheering tidings of the text, "He is not here; for he is risen: come, see the place where the Lord lay."

Let us consider,

I. *The Person referred to.*

"The Lord."

While it is a most important and blessed truth, that Christ really assumed our nature, and became our true kinsman; yet it is not less true or important, that he possessed a nature infinitely superior to ours; that he claimed equality with the Father; and that, as such, he bears the title of Lord, even "Lord of all."

The propriety of this designation will appear from its application to him,

1. By prophets.

There is a sublime representation of him as such in Isaiah's vision, vi. 5–10; as quoted, also, John xii. 41; see, also, Isai. xl. 3, and Jer. xxiii. 6, and Psal. lxviii. 16–18.

2. By the apostles and disciples.

Peter says, "He is Lord of all," Acts x. 36. Paul describes him as "Lord over all," Rom. x. 12; "The Lord from heaven," 1 Cor. xv. 47; "Lord of glory," 1 Cor. ii. 8. John, in the Revelation, xvii. 14, "Lord of lords, and King of kings."

The same title is given to him,

3. By angels.

At his birth: "Unto you is born this day in the city of David, a Saviour who is Christ the Lord." And also in the text: "Come, see the place where the Lord lay."

It was received and assumed,

4. By Christ himself.

The disciples invariably addressed him by this title. He often spoke of himself under the same. And he expressly says, "Ye call me Lord and Master, and say well;" John xiii. 13.

The highest terms conceivable are addressed to him,

5. By the Father.

"Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever," &c. And again: "And thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth," &c. Heb. i. 8–12.

Let us consider,

II. *The Place where the Lord lay*

The place was the sepulchre. And there are many interesting circumstances connected with the place.

1. It was not his own; but he was beholden for it to another.

It is said, that the Jews were guilty of neglecting the interment of the poor; and, doubtless, the remains of criminals were often left to wither near the place of execution. This might have been their design in reference to Christ, had not Joseph of Arimathea begged the body, and laid it in his own tomb; by which, also, an illustrious prophecy was fulfilled, Isai. liii. 9.

2. In this place he remained a certain predicted period.

A period sufficient to prove his decease, and yet not sufficient to effect putrefaction. For, by the Psalmist, God had said, "He would not leave his soul in hell, nor suffer his Holy One to see corruption;" Psal. xvi. 10; Acts ii. 31. Christ, also, had spoken to the same effect; Matt. xvi. 21; Luke xiii. 32; Matt. xvi. 21.

3. This place was carefully watched and powerfully guarded by his enemies.

And by this the Christian has irrefragable evidence that Christ did rise from the

dead, and never could have been secretly removed by his disciples. Never did the enemies of Jesus do him better service, than when they rolled the mighty stone to the mouth of the tomb, sealed it with the imperial signet, and caused the spot to be watched by the Roman guard. The excuse made to the people, when Christ was not to be found, carries on its front its own refutation; Matt. xxvii. 65; xxviii. 11, &c.

4. From this place Christ arose with power and glory.

An angel descends from heaven; the stone is rolled away; an earthquake shakes the ground; the keepers tremble and become as dead men, the glory of the Lord surrounds the spot; death is overcome; and Christ arises, saying, "I am he that liveth, and was dead; and behold, I am alive for evermore;" Rev. i. 18.

Consider,

III. *The Lessons to be derived from a contemplative Visit to the Place where Christ lay.*

"Come, *see* the place where the Lord lay."

By a visit to the empty sepulchre we learn,

1. That the official engagements of Jesus are completed.

He became the voluntary surety for the sinner. As such he endured the smart, bore the curse, becoming a curse for us. He gave his life as a ransom; the price was accepted, demanded, paid. He yields up his spirit and enters the region of the dead. Prophecy is now fulfilled; justice has no further claim; the angel is sent to open the door of the prison, and the surety is liberated. By this Christ's claim to the Messiahship is irrevocably established, and a firm foundation laid for the hope of the sinner.

2. We learn that the enemies of Christ and of man are completely vanquished.

Yes, death has been overcome in our nature, and in his own domains. The Bozrah Conqueror has trampled upon all the powers of darkness. He has led captivity captive; spoiled principalities and powers; and he appears with sin, Satan, and death chained to the wheels of his triumphal car. We learn,

3. That the grave is a hallowed, sanctified place.

Jesus has perfumed it with the fragrance of his own person. He has divested it of its natural gloom, and it now becomes the happy retreat of the worn-out pilgrim where he shall repose in happy quiet until the day of his full redemption. We learn,

4. That the grave is only the temporary abode of the bodies of mankind.

Its bars are now dislodged, and its chains broken. Adam forced an entrance into it and the second Adam, the Lord from heaven, has made a passage through it. And through all its once dark and dreary extent there is now inscribed in glorious characters, "Christ has abolished death; and life and immortality are brought to light by the gospel." "Now is Christ risen from the dead and become the first-fruits of them that slept." "Because I live, ye shall live also." We learn,

5. Where we are to find Jesus.

Not in Bethlehem, at Jordan, in the temple, in the garden, on the cross, or in the sepulchre; no; he is now exalted at God's right hand, where he waits to dispense the blessings of his grace, and to give remission of sins to all who believe and call upon his name. "Let us, then, draw near with a true heart," &c.; Heb iv. 16, and x. 22.

APPLICATION.

1. Come, skeptical sinner, and see the place where Christ lay; and admit his claims, and receive him as the Son of God.

2. Come, mourning sinner, and see the place where Christ lay; and believe his ability to save thee to the uttermost, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for thee.

3. Come, timid believer, and see the place where Christ lay; and be not kept in bondage, through the fear of death. It is thy privilege to exclaim, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?"

SKETCH XLVI.

THE CHRISTIAN'S WATCHWORD

"Go forward."—*Exod.* xiv. 15.

THE text is connected with the wonderful deliverance of the Israelites from the land of Egypt. After a series of the most astounding miracles, the proud and impious monarch had given them permission to depart. But scarcely were they on their way

before he again relapsed into his former state of infatuated hardness, and resolved to pursue, and either to destroy them, or again bring them beneath his cruel and despotical yoke. The spot where he overtook them was near to the Red Sea. The hearts of the people melted with fear. Before them was a watery sepulchre; behind them a powerful army. Escape from both seemed impossible; but God said to Moses, "Speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward:" and onwards they went; God opening a passage for them through the mighty waters; while Pharaoh and his host were all overwhelmed by them, so that not so much as one of them remained to carry back the tidings of their ruin.

Believers are on their way to their heavenly Canaan. Enemies will pursue them; difficulties oppose their course; fears often intimidate them. But the Captain of our salvation has one watchword for all his followers; and it is contained in the text: "Go forward."

Let us notice,

I. *In what the Christian is to go forward.*

Now this is evident; he must go forward in the path to eternal life. More particularly, he must go forward,

1. In the increase of Christian graces.

He must seek to have all the fruits of the Spirit, and all in an enlarged degree. Faith must grow mightily, that he may stand fast, and be shielded from the attacks of enemies. Hope must be increasingly bright, that his head may be lifted up. Love must be increasingly ardent, constraining him onwards in all that is associated with self-denial and suffering in Christ's cause. Meekness must be the expression of the eye; patience of the countenance; kindness the language of the tongue; and the whole soul clothed with humility.

2. In the exhibition of Christian virtues.

Such as justice, temperance, brotherly kindness, and charity. There must be nonconformity to the world; hospitality to saints; and goodness and compassion to all men. There must be an imitating of him "who went about doing good," and who hath left us an example that we should follow his steps.

3. In the performance of Christian duties.

In reading the holy oracles, and in holy meditation, forward. In secret and public prayer, forward. In family worship and discipline, forward. In the services of the sanctuary, forward. In enterprises of usefulness and plans of benevolence, forward In all the personal and relative obligations of life, forward.

4. In the attainment of Christian privileges and blessings.

"Peace flowing as a river, and righteousness abounding as the waves of the sea." Title to heaven becoming more clear; experience more rich and fruitful; heart softening and becoming more completely moulded by divine love; joy increasing, confidence stronger; conscience more holy; soul more happy; body, soul, and spirit more hallowed and consecrated to the service and glory of God. "Changed into the image of God, from glory to glory by the Spirit of the Lord."

Let us consider,

II. *Why the Christian should go forward*

1. God commands it, and his authority is imperative.

He made us, and has, therefore, a claim to our obedience. He is our Sovereign Legislator and Judge. To reject his commands, is rebellion; to deny his claims, is infidelity; to refuse his authority, is treason. But the Christian is an affectionate son, a loyal subject, an obedient servant and therefore feels, in all its commanding force, the injunction, "Go forward."

2. Christ enforces it, and his claims are irresistible.

He enforces it by his discourses and by his example. And he claims it on the ground of his love to us, and our professed love to him. He claims it on the ground of our calling, for we are called to glory. On the ground of consistency, for we are his friends if we do whatsoever he commands us. His dying agonies seem to appeal to apostate professors, and say, "I suffer these for you; will ye also go away?" "Whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words," &c.

3. The Holy Spirit moves us to it, and his influences must not be quenched.

Does he not incite us forward in prayer and in praise? Does he not quicken, and enliven, and strengthen? Does he not guide, and uphold, and support? Does he not protect, and comfort, and sanctify? And all he does for us, and within us, is that we may "go forward." It is urged upon us,

4. By the examples of saints with whom we are forever to be associated.

Noah, bad as the world was, went forward. Abraham and the patriarchs went forward. Moses, Joshua, and Caleb went forward. Samuel, and David, and the prophets went forward. The apostles and disciples (save Judas) went forward. The first Christian martyrs and confessors went forward. The reformers and our pious forefathers went forward. And now they have reached the goal, and inherit the promises, doubtless they watch our course with great interest and intense anxiety. "Seeing, then, that we are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight," &c.; Heb. xii. 1. We should be influenced,

5. By the sufficiency of the means provided for our progress and safety.

Had Israel an infallible guide, the pillar of cloud by day, and of fire by night? So have we. Had Israel an invincible defence in the arm of God? So have we. Had Israel water from the rock, and manna from heaven? So have we. Yes; "the Lord God is a sun and shield; he will give grace and glory, and will withhold no good thing from them that walk uprightly." We are urged onwards,

6. By the dreadful and calamitous effects produced by apostacy.

Light quenched—peace lost—forsaken by the Spirit—abandoned to sin, and misery, and despair. Death terrific—meeting with the Judge fearful—eternity full of indescribable horror and wo. See Luke ix. 62, Heb. iv. 11, x. 26, xxxviii. 39 We are allured forwards,

7. By the glorious rewards which God shall bestow on his persevering people.

"Be thou faithful unto death," &c.; Rev ii. 10 "To him that overcometh," &c.; Rev. iii. 5, 21. "To them who, by patient continuance in well-doing, seek for glory, and honor, and immortality," &c.; Rom. ii. 8

APPLICATION.

1. Let the subject be addressed to all classes and ages of Christian professors. To the young believer, and the aged disciple, the motto is the same—forward. To the illiterate, and the learned Christian, the same—forward. Ministers, and deacons, and members, the same—forward. Forward, in prosperity and adversity; in sickness and health; in life and until death.

2. The subject must be reversed to the sinner. He is in the wrong path; far enough already from God and happiness and heaven. If he adopts the Christian's watchword, it will be ruin, misery, perdition, despair. Oh, then, stop, stop, poor sinner, and stop now. Turn from thy evil ways and live. "Ask for the old paths, and walk therein," &c "Seek the Lord while he may be found," &c. "Strive to enter at the strait gate," &c. "Return unto the Lord, for he hath redeemed thee." Amen.

SPECIMENS FROM CELEBRATED AMERICAN PREACHERS.

SKETCH XLVII.

By Dr. Payson, *Pastor of the Second Church, Portland, U. S.*

OUR OBLIGATIONS TO GOD AND MEN.

"Render to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and to God the things that are God's."—*Mark* xii. 17

Notice, the plot of the Pharisees to ensnare the Redeemer; the plot was artfully laid, and its execution artfully conducted; but in vain did human craftiness attempt to circumvent Divine wisdom Instead of directly replying to their question, our Saviour called for a piece of money, and asked whose image and superscription bore. They said, Cæsar's. Render, then, said he, to Cæsar, &c. The spirit of the passage requires us to regard the rights of all beings as sacred, and to give to them all what is theirs. This important practical truth we now propose to consider In attempting to do this, I shall show,

I. *What is due to God*, and II. *What is due to man from each of us.*

I. *What is due to God.*

Or what are the things, the property of God, which our Saviour here requires us to render to him. The question may be answered very briefly in one word, and that word is *all;* for it is very easy to show, that all things are, in the most perfect sense, the property of God. He is the Creator of all. "The earth is the Lord's," &c. Of course we, and all that we possess, are God's property. More particularly,

1. Our souls with all their faculties are the property of God.

He is the Father of our spirits, who gave them all their faculties, and endowed them with immortality. Is it asked, what is implied in giving our souls to God? I answer, when we employ all their faculties in his service, in performing the work he has assigned us. When our understandings are diligently employed in discovering his will, when our memories retain it, our hearts love it, our wills submit to it, and the whole inner man obeys it.

2. Our bodies are the property of God.

He is also the Former of our bodies. Hence we are exhorted to glorify God with our bodies which are his. This is done, when we employ our members as instruments of righteousness unto holiness.

3. Our time is God's property.

During every moment of our existence, we are the property of God. To his service, therefore, every moment of our time ought to be consecrated.

4. All our knowledge and literary acquisitions are God's property.

They are acquired by us in the use of that time, and of those faculties which are his, and of course he may justly claim them as his own. He compares our faculties and his other gifts, to a sum of money intrusted by a master to his servants, &c. And in the parable of the talents he shows us what will be the doom of those who do not cultivate their faculties, or who do not consecrate to him the fruits of that cultivation.

5. Our temporal possessions are God's property.

Men are not the owners, but merely stewards, to whose care the Lord of all things has intrusted a portion of his property, to be employed agreeably to his directions. Hence we should employ them, in supplying our own wants, as is really necessary to support and happiness, or as is consistent with the rules of temperance and the demands of benevolence.

6. Our influence is God's property.

All our influence over others, results either from our natural faculties, our knowledge, or our wealth, all of which have been shown to be the property of God.

He then who withholds from God any of these things, or any part of them, does not comply with the precept in our text. I proceed to show,

II. *What things are due from us to Men.*

The question, what God requires us to give to men, and to which they have, therefore, a right,—a right founded in his revealed will,—I now propose to answer.

1. All men, without exception, have a right to our love.

That we should love them as we love ourselves, and that as we have opportunity we should do to them, as we should wish them, in a change of situation, to do to us. Our enemies are not to be excepted. Every man, who dies without having done all the world all the good which it was in his power to do, dies in debt to the world, or to the world's Creator.

2. To all whom God has made our superiors, we owe obedience, submission, and respect.

As subjects we are bound to obey, honor, and pray for our rulers. As children we are to obey and honor our parents. Servants are required to be obedient to their masters with all reverence. The aged have a claim to respect.

3. To our inferiors we owe kindness, gentleness, and condescension.

Parents, provoke not your children to wrath. Masters, forbear threatenings. Let all condescend to men of low estate. The poor and afflicted have special claims upon our sympathy and pecuniary relief.

4. Those of us who are members of Christ's visible church, owe to each other the performance of all the duties which result from our connection.

We are bound to watch over our professing brethren, to admonish when necessary, and in all things seek the peace and welfare of the church. To do good to all men, specially to those who are of the household of faith.

5. There are some things which we owe our families and connections.

As husbands and wives. As parents. As heads of families, &c., &c. For he

who neglects his own household has denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel.

IMPROVEMENT.

1 How great, how inconceivable is the debt which we have contracted both to God and to men! Well may God accuse us of robbing and defrauding him. Though we forget God's rights, he will not. He knows how to claim and to receive what is his. He has death ready to arrest us. He has an eternal prison from whence there is no escape, &c.

2. We may learn our need of an interest in the Saviour and the impossibility of being saved without him. We evidently cannot discharge our past debts. In Christ is there help. He becomes surety for all who believe in him, &c., takes upon himself the debt, which they can never discharge, and thus sets their souls at liberty. This is the way, the only way of salvation.

And do not reason, conscience, and a regard to our own happiness, combine with Scripture in urging us to accept the offers of this divine Benefactor, and, constrained by his love, to live henceforth to him, and not to ourselves?

SKETCH XLVIII.

By Dr. S. H. Tyng, *Minister of the Protestant Episcopal Church, New York, U. S*

THE POWER OF THE GOSPEL TO SAVE.

"It is the power of God unto salvation, to every one that believeth."—*Rom.* i. 16.

This is the reason which the apostle gives, why he was not ashamed of the gospel of Jesus. Of an instrument of such power and so much good among men, he might well glory wherever he went.

In the eyes of the self-righteous Jews, the gospel of Jesus was a stumbling-block, because it allowed nothing to human merit. And with the conceited Greeks it was accounted foolishness, because it paid no deference to the claims of human reason. But notwithstanding it was inconceivable to those who confided in their own wisdom, that the salvation of man should be effected by any means apparently so unsuited to the end, St. Paul hesitated not to affirm, in the face of all opposition, that the gospel would be powerful for the production of the end which was intended, that it would operate as the power of God unto salvation to every one who believed.

I. *Consider the Gospel as the great Instrument of Salvation in what it does for us*

1. The law held us in bondage; this bondage the gospel has broken.

It has provided for us a sacrifice, which can answer every claim of the law, and has given a new and glorious hope. Hence God can exercise mercy to those whom the law has condemned, without setting aside in any degree the authority or sanctions of his law.

2. Satan held us in captivity; from his power the gospel rescues us.

The Lord Jesus has destroyed him who had the power of death. The death of Jesus has been the instrument by which Satan's kingdom has been demolished, and the Saviour's empire has been established throughout the world.

3. The power of the gospel for us is exhibited in the accepted sufficiency of the Lord Jesus.

In his prevailing intercession for us as our great High Priest, and in the crowning of the subjects of his redemption for his sake.

4. It is exhibited on earth in the providence which causes all things to promote the salvation of sinners.

Continual progress of truth. Conquests over error, &c. Justifying of innumerable multitudes of sinners, &c.

5. It is exhibited in hell, in the restraint which it has put to the power of Satan.

His designs of malice limited. His subjection to the Lord Jesus as the head over all, &c. The power of the gospel is displayed,

II. *In that gracious Operation which brings back every individual sinner to Holiness and Peace.*

The gospel displays its power unto salvation,

1. In the awakening and conversion of sinners.

Soul naturally refuses subjection to God. Under power of Satan. Without concern for himself. In a state of conflict with God, and opposed to the grace of Jesus. The gospel is mighty, in pulling down these strongholds, &c. Is made the savor of life, and new-creates the sinner

2. In the free justification of a sinner before God.

It comes to the penitent transgressor as a ministration of righteousness, as a word of reconciliation and peace. It opens the prison doors, and bids the captive go free.

The power of the law was for destruction, the power of the gospel is a life-giving power. It takes away the burden of guilt, it silences every accuser, it fills the believer with the confidence of hope, and it forbids every weapon to prosper, which is formed against him.

The gospel displays its power,

3. In its progressive sanctification of those whom it has converted to God.

It is the great and only instrument of making men holy; John xvii. 17. In the gospel we behold, "as in a glass, the glory of the Lord," &c. 2 Cor. iii. 18.

4. In upholding and preserving those who are brought to a knowledge of the truth.

It is the great instrument of keeping every child of God, through faith, unto salvation. It is styled an incorruptible seed, an abiding seed in the heart; and brings forth permanent and increasing fruit.

The gospel exhibits its power,

5. In the final crowning of the saints in glory.

Countless armies shall assemble before Him, with his mark upon their foreheads; all the fruits of his redemption, plucked out of the jaws of the lion; begotten again through his word, to the enjoyment of a lively hope, an everlasting possession, and permitted to dwell in the presence of the Lamb forever.

APPLICATION.

The text teaches us,

1. The proper ground of hope.—If you look upon your own characters, you find yourselves utterly weak and unworthy. You have nothing which you can offer to God. But in the gospel of Jesus there is sufficient and abiding hope. There the divine power presents itself to your acceptance, as all-sufficient for your wants; and invites you to lean upon it, as a staff which can never be broken.

2 The way of divine acceptance: "To every one that believeth." You are simply to accept the provisions of the gospel: and as Noah, believing God's word, sought refuge and protection in the ark; and as the persecuted Israelite, trusting the Divine command, found a shelter in the city of refuge; so you must flee to the work which the Lord Jesus has finished, and plead nothing but that for your acceptance before God. We see,

3. To whom all the praise is to be given for the work of salvation.—In this work man is nothing. He brings to it no merit, no strength, no claim of any kind. The whole glory belongs to Christ. He is the great object of universal praise; all the angels of God worship him; all the spirits of just men made perfect ascribe honor unto him; and from our hearts he asks the same tribute of thanksgiving and honor. Learn,

4. That the same power the gospel has to *save*, it has to *destroy*.—It increases the misery and condemnation of those who reject it. It has an irresistible energy, it comes with an overwhelming force upon those who have despised its mercies; with a destructive weight it falls upon such, to grind them to powder, to consign them over to everlasting ruin, and to bind them in chains of eternal darkness and death.

SKETCH LIX.

By the late Rev JOSIAH SMITH, A M., *of Charleston, S. C.*

THE CHARACTER AND EMPLOYMENT OF GOOD ANGELS.

"Bless the Lord, ye his angels that excel in strength, that do his commandments, hearkening unto the voice of his word."—*Psal.* ciii. 20.

OUR Bible, in near a hundred places, mentions a glorious species or rank of spirits, which are not encumbered with flesh and blood, as we are, who breathe a much freer air, have a higher place of abode, stand nearer the throne of God, and are capable of doing him vastly more and better service than we mortals can pretend to. The text takes it for granted, there are *such spirits*, or superior beings; calls them by their *name*, exhibits their *character* or *description*, and insinuates their obligation to *bless the Lord*.

I. *We have the name by which these superior spirits are called*, viz., *Angels*.

This name signifies nothing more nor less than MESSENGERS, and it is a very significant name for those ministering

spirits, who are sent forth to minister to the heirs of salvation. Our text,

II. *Exhibits a noble character and description of them.*

They excel in strength, do his commandments, hearkening to the voice of his word. Angels are said,

1 To excel in strength.

They excel in strength,

(1) In a natural sense. What a prodigious idea it gives us of their strength, when in one night, a single angel destroyed so many thousands in the camp of the Assyrians!

(2) In a moral sense. They are all light, and flame, and love; all life and vigor. They excel in knowledge, in purity of will, in holiness of affection, &c.

2. They do his commandments.

And this implies,

(1) That they execute whatever God commands. Theirs is not a partial, limited, imperfect obedience, but an obedience extending to the whole of the divine mind in reference to them. It implies,

(2) That they do nothing, either in a way of mercy or judgment, without the appointment of God. They are always in readiness, but they never go before they are sent. Not an angel dare spread his wing, or stir from the threshold of heaven, till God bids him go; but then he flies with all the speed and agility of a spirit. Yes, angels obey him in a *sublime and perfect* manner. They obey him *extensively—universally—affectionately—cheerfully—* and *swiftly*.

3. They hearken to the voice of his word.

By voice we understand such a way of communicating the divine will and pleasure as is proper to spirits. Let us consider,

(1) What that word is, to which the angels hearken. It may intend, those *particular messages* or errands, on which the angels are occasionally sent. Or it may refer to the *Holy Scriptures*, which, though not designed expressly for angels, yet contain truths of which the highest angel in heaven need not be ashamed; nay, may study with advantage. Or it may refer to the *Lord Jesus Christ*, who is expressly called the word of God; Rev. xix. 13; John i. 1, &c. And this application of the text is not improbable, when we remember that Christ is Lord of angels, and that God commands all the angels of heaven to worship him. Consider,

(2) The proper force and import of the expression "*hearkening* to the voice of his word." It obviously signifies fixed attention to the significations of the divine will. To *hearken*, is to give close and diligent attention; hence, the angels are represented as "*standing before God*," with their ears always open. They, as it were, watch every word that proceedeth from the mouth of God; and they do this, from the *humble deference* they pay to the authority of the great God, and from the *natural esteem and affection* these sublime spirits have for the *will* of God. To *hearken*, evidently imports ready and cheerful obedience which the angels pay to it. None of his commandments are irksome or grievous to them, but his will is always acceptable to them, and they always obey, not by constraint, but of a ready mind. Take notice, then,

III. *Of the divine and sacred employment of praise that is here assigned them.*

"Bless the Lord, ye his angels," &c. The Psalmist here insinuates that the work of praise well becomes them, and that it is a divine employment to which they are not strangers. It is natural to suppose,

1. That the angels bless God for his immediate favors to themselves.

They are not like us, unthankful. They are conscious of the riches of the divine goodness towards them. They feel their own powers and capacity for happiness; their exalted work and their sublime pleasures, and they praise him day and night in his temple.

2. They cannot but bless God in the view of his adorable nature and perfections.

When they take a survey of his glory and uncreated excellencies, it is impossible but they must adore and bless him. No doubt they know much more of him than we at present are capable of.

3. No doubt they sing the displays of his glories, as seen through all his works.

(1) The angels adore God in the works of creation. The act of creation itself is astonishing; an act of omnipotence. Nature affords a grand theatre on which the Almighty appears in his glory. When God laid the first foundation, the corner-stone of the earth, these "morning-stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy." To see light, beauty variety, and

order, where confusion and darkness and chaos were before, no doubt excited their highest wonder, admiration, and praise.

(2) They find occasion of praise, in the recovery of the world by the Son of God. The contrivance of the plan, harmony of mercy and truth, righteousness and peace, incarnation of Christ, sorrows, sufferings, death resurrection, ascension, &c. In all these they took the deepest interest, and desire to "look into them."

> "The highest angel never saw
> So much of God before."

(3) They magnify and extol the Lord in the application of grace to the fallen children of man. "There is joy in the presence of the angels of God," &c. And they wait upon the saints, and most probably conduct them to glory: Luke xv. 10; xxi. 22; Heb. i. 14.

APPLICATION.

1. Let us endeavor to imitate the angels in seeking more moral strength, in an obedience like unto theirs, in attention to the voice of God, and in the holy work of adoration and praise.

2. Let us walk worthy of the honor we have in being attended by angels.

3. Long for a closer union and more abiding fellowship with them in the heavenly world.

SKETCH L.

By the Rev. W. B. SPRAGUE, D.D., *of Albany, N. Y.*

THE GOD OF THE CHRISTIAN AND THE GOD OF THE INFIDEL.

"Among the gods there is none like unto thee, O Lord."—*Psal.* lxxxvi. 8.

THE existence of a God is a fundamental principle of all religion. The mind, wherever this doctrine is presented to it, instantly perceives that it is grasping an idea of immense importance, and that, before it has paused to survey its momentous and infinitely extended bearings. But when considered in its relations to the material and immaterial world, to every object in the wide range of thought, it gathers an interest which the mind, in its loftiest aspirings, is inadequate to comprehend; being a sort of dividing-line between the territories of light and the territories of darkness; between a region illumined by the acknowledgment of the active presence of a God, and a region over which hang the clouds and shadows and curses of atheism. Laying out of view the gods of the heathen, to which the text refers, I purpose to bring before you,

I. The God of the Infidel, and the God of the Christian; and to inquire, II. Which is most likely to exalt the Character of Man; which best adapted to meet his Necessities.

Let us,

I. *Compare the God of the Infidel, and the God of the Christian.*

1. The infidel's God is a being of uncertain attributes; the character of the Christian's God is fixed and certain.

In the records of deism there are scarcely two individuals who acknowledge the same God. Some have entertained imperfect, yet in some degree just views of him; and some have seemed to feel some lofty aspirations in contemplating his character. Others, whose conceptions are more inadequate and gross. The infidel's God is a being to whom no fixed character belongs.

Not so with the Being whom the Christian worships. Whether we look at each of the various attributes of which his character is composed, or at the whole in glorious combination, we see the indubitable impress of certainty. Hence we find, that in every clime, and in every age, the God whom Christians adore is the same; "the same yesterday, to-day, and forever."

2. The God of the infidel is little more than a mere distant spectator of events; the God of the Christian is everywhere, in the exercise of a sustaining, controlling, and all-gracious energy.

The infidel's God is represented as reposing in a kind of indolent majesty, exercising but little regard to the works of his hands. He takes some cognizance of the grander events which occur in the physical and moral world; but with the lesser and every-day concerns of life, it is supposed that he has little to do. His providence is a sort of indefinite superintendence of his works, which may leave man to become the sport of accident.

The Christian's God, on the other hand, not only fills all space, but fills it with an active controlling energy. He is present in all worlds to control the events of each

and while the whole system of things moves on exactly in accordance with the dictates of his will and of his wisdom, his regards are as intensely fixed upon the destiny of the obscurest individual, or even upon the unfolding of a flower or the motion of an atom, as if it were the only object to engross his infinite mind. As nothing is too grand, so nothing is too insignificant for his eye and providence to reach. The worm that creeps upon his footstool, and the angel that burns before his throne, are alike within the range of his vision—within the control of his arm—within the circle of his regard.

3. The God of the infidel we can contemplate only in his abstract perfections; the attributes of the Christian's God are embodied in the person of Jesus Christ.

The infidel may inspect the elements of his own intellectual and moral nature, and may find in them some faint resemblance to some of the divine perfections. Or else, he looks abroad upon the divine works, &c., &c. But I maintain, that the attributes of God, viewed merely in this light, are clothed with a sort of abstraction, which is fitted rather to make the mind pause and reflect upon its own littleness, than to bring its powers into exercise in acts of intense and grateful homage.

But Christianity entirely relieves this difficulty. The Christian's God comes out, as it were, from behind the veil of his abstract perfections, and brings himself directly in contact with our thoughts and feelings, I had almost said, with our very senses, in the person of Jesus Christ. Here God is manifested in the flesh; the divine glory, as it shines in the person of his Son, is so softened, that we can gaze upon it, without being overpowered by the vision. The actions of a God we can here view, the attributes of a God we can here contemplate, the authoritative declarations of a God we can here listen to, through the medium of a nature like our own.

4. The God of the infidel is, at best, only the God of nature and providence; the God of the Christian is also the God of redemption.

To the former let as much perfection be attributed as reason can possibly conceive—say, that he made the heavens, &c., rules the world, &c., yet it is not even claimed for him, that he is a redeeming God.

The Christian's God possesses every perfection, and performs every work attributed to the infidel's God. But in addition to all this, and beyond all this, he is the God of redemption. In this character there is a new and more magnificent display of his attributes; a softening of those which appeared stern; a blending of those which seemed opposite; justice, holiness, faithfulness, and mercy, all beaming forth in man's salvation. Here, then, is the difference; the one is, and the other is not, encircled with the glory of a Redeemer. Keeping this contrast in view, let us proceed to inquire,

II. *Whether the Infidel's or the Christian's God is best adapted to exalt the character of man, and to meet his necessities.*

Which is best adapted,

1. To exalt the human character?

That a belief in the Christian's God is the more influential God is evident from the fact,

(1) That he is a Being with whom man is brought into more immediate contact. The Christian's God meets him everywhere. He observes all his actions, &c. He manifests himself through the medium of man's own nature, &c.

(2) There is far more in his character to make an appeal to the active principles of our nature. Take, for instance, the principle of gratitude; how much more is there to waken this into exercise in the character of the Christian's God, than of the God of the infidel! Same will apply to confidence, fear, &c.

(3) From the very constitution of our nature our characters become assimilated to the object of our supreme homage. The only question then is, if indeed it be a question: Whether the infidel's God, or the Christian's God, is the more excellent and glorious? It is manifest, the Christian's God, then, does possess a more exalted character than the God of the infidel, it follows, therefore, from the law of our nature, to which we just adverted, that a belief in the former exerts the nobler influence.

(4) We appeal to facts. I challenge you to point me to one character formed under belief in the infidel's God, which exhibits a high degree of moral virtue. You may find some who are inoffensive, or who are not stained with open vice; but never will you find one of lofty virtuous

aspirations, or elevated to a high standard of moral excellence. Where will you find characters formed by faith in the infidel's God like those of Howard, Wilberforce, Thornton, and Edwards, and a multitude of others, whose names illumine the record of Christianity?

Our second inquiry is,

2. Whether the God of the infidel, or of the Christian, is best adapted to meet man's necessities?

Man needs,

(1) A guide. (2) A protector. (3) A Saviour.

Will the God of the infidel, or the Christian's God, best meet these exigencies? The reply is and must be obvious, The Christian's God is the surest guide, the safest guard, and the only Saviour.

APPLICATION.

1. Who dare trust to the infidel's God? Who trust him as a refuge—as a Saviour? Who seek pardon from him—sanctification from him? Dare you trust him in the hour of extremity—on the bed of death—and throw that deathless spirit of yours on his protection for eternity? Above all, who dare do this, when thousands have died reproaching themselves for their wretched infatuation?

2. Remember, that in order that the Christian's God may become your portion, you must yield your hearts and lives to his service; you must love him, trust him, obey him. Then, I repeat, you may be fearless in adversity; fearless in death—fearless amid the funeral fires of the world.

SKELETON LXI.

MANASSEH.

"And when he was in affliction he besought the Lord his God, and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers."—2 *Chron.* xxxiii. 12, 13.

God has given us the most express declarations of his mercy in various portions of his word. And in addition to these, he has given us many blessed examples, where his mercy has been embodied, in sparing the unworthy, pardoning the guilty, and making happy with his favor the most vile and degraded of our race. Among the many striking instances recorded, none are more astonishing, or deserve our particular attention, than Manasseh.

Let us then consider his history, I. As to his career in crime; and II. In his penitential return and acceptance of God.

Let us notice Manasseh,

I. *As to his career in crime.*

Here we have before us a very lamentable and gloomy scene. Depravity seems to have effected its utmost in him, and we behold guilt of the most daring and aggravated character darkening the whole man.

1. He was notoriously wicked.

"He did that which was evil, &c., like unto the abomination of the heathen;" ver. 2. He paid no regard to external decency; he made no pretence to the principles of common morality; he was vile, and manifestly so in the face of the people. He excelled in crime; for not only did he display in his life the evil practices of his own countrymen, but he debased himself, by imitating the crimes of the dark and corrupt heathen, "whom God had cast out before the children of Israel."

2. He was a gross idolater.

"He built the high places, reared altars for Baalim, and made groves, and worshipped all the hosts of heaven;" ver. 3. He thus abandoned the God and religion of his fathers and of his nation, and yielded himself up to the debasing infatuations of idolatry. What a prostration of the soul—of the understanding—of judgment—of reason!

3. He was a monster of cruelty, and a ferocious persecutor.

Caused children to pass through the fire, &c.; his own son among the rest; 2 Kings xxi. 6. Shed innocent blood very much, till he had filled Jerusalem from one end to the other; 2 Kings xxi. 16. And this blood was the blood of the righteous—the faithful servants of God, who rather feared Jehovah's frown, than the impious and bloody laws of the wicked Manasseh

4. He was a public corruptor of the people.

"He made the people to err, and to do worse than the heathen," ver. 9. He did this in the way of allurement, by his elevated, influential example; and by despotic force in placing his cruelties before the people. And thus the air became thoroughly infected; and a torrent was opened upon the nation which threatened to sweep away all that was excellent in

morals—all that was amiable and useful in goodness—and all that was pure and holy in devotion.

5. He attempted to ally himself to the spirits of the infernal world.

Hence "he observed times, used enchantments, and witchcraft, and dealt with a familiar spirit, and with wizards;" ver. 6. What cool, systematic wickedness! What deliberate and deep-toned hostility to God and his religion!

6. He did all this under peculiarly aggravated circumstances.

Manasseh did this, who was a king, not a private individual; king of Judah, not a pagan monarch; the son of the excellent and pious Hezekiah—religiously educated—surrounded by pious priests and prophets; yet, thus exalted of God, he threw off his yoke, abandoned himself to all that was insulting to God, and vile and ruinous to himself and to his people.

And what was the result? Did not God's displeasure wax hot against him? Was not Divine Providence clearly seen in his signal ruin? This might indeed have been expected; but "God's ways are not as our ways; nor his thoughts as our thoughts," &c.

Let us then turn and contemplate his history,

II. *In his penitential return and acceptance of God.*

Notice,

1. The means employed.

Two things are specified; it is said,

(1) That God spake to Manasseh; ver. 10. Perhaps by powerful appeals to his own conscience—by overwhelming fears—by scaring visions of the night—or, more probably, by the priests and prophets. See 2 Kings xxi. 10. Most likely, at first, by exhortation and reproof; then, by threatening, &c. But neither he nor his people would hearken. Then,

(2) God brought him into affliction. He was led captive to Babylon, bound with fetters, and thrown into the solitary prison. And here he had an opportunity of seeing what his gods would do for him—if Baalim could deliver him—if the hosts of heaven could save him. Here he had time for retrospection—for reflection. Here he felt his weakness; and here he was made to drink of the cup of affliction and sorrow. What a reverse of condition, of circumstances! And the afflictive hand of God was made a blessing to him; it was the means of his repentance and salvation.

2. Observe the signs of his penitence.

(1) He humbled himself greatly. He had before exalted himself against God; he is now abased before him, and this greatly. Great humiliation should follow great and aggravated sin.

(2) He besought, prayed unto, and earnestly supplicated God; ver. 13. All these expressions are applied to him. He besought God, acknowledged his patience and forbearance, and desired his pity and forgiveness. He prayed to him, continued to present himself before him; and he supplicated, he earnestly entreated and implored his forgiveness, with all importunity and contrition of heart

3. The gracious results of his penitence.

(1) God was entreated of him; did not spurn him from his footstool; inclined his ear unto him; condescended to notice his entreaties; forgave his sin, and made him the happy recipient of his accepting love.

(2) He brought him again to his own kingdom. "When a man's ways please the Lord, he maketh his enemies to be at peace with him." "Who shall harm us," &c.

4. The happy fruits of his penitence

(1) He became the enemy of idolatry and vice—took away the strange gods, &c.; ver. 15.

(2) He became an example and patron of righteousness; built up the Lord's altars, and offered peace and thank-offerings thereupon; and commanded Judah to serve the Lord God of Israel. He lived several years after his restoration to his kingdom, and ruled, and lived, and died in the fear of God

APPLICATION.

Learn, 1. The lamentable depravity and wickedness of the human heart. 2. The invaluableness of afflictive dispensations Many have had to bless God for afflictions. 3. The freeness, fulness, and efficacy of divine grace. 4. The true and only way to escape the divine displeasure. By humbling ourselves and repenting; by prayer and supplication for the mercy of God.

SKELETON LXII.

THE RENT VEIL.

"And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom."—*Matt.* xxvii. 51.

THE death of Jesus was accompanied by a number of striking events. The earth quaked, the rocks rent, the graves were opened, the sun was darkened, and, according to the text, "the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom."

Let us consider, I. The event as literally recorded. II. In its spiritual significancy. And, III. The effects it should produce upon us.

I. *The Event as literally recorded.*

Several things will deserve our attention. Notice,

1. What it was that was rent.

"The veil of the temple." An account of it is furnished, Exod. xxvi. 31. The veil was designed to separate between the holy and most holy place; and was never passed, neither did human eye glance beyond it, except once a year, when the great high-priest entered with the blood of expiation. Heb. ix. 7. Notice,

2. What took place.

"The veil was rent." And the rent was,

(1) Supernatural. No human hand could have done it. Earthquake might have thrown it down, but could not have divided it in twain. It was evidently the work of the finger of God.

(2) It was systematical. Not torn in shreds, but equally divided.

(3) It was complete. From the top to the bottom; from the highest to the lowest thread; so that the division was entire. Notice,

3. When it occurred.

Connected with two very important events. The one was, that it occurred when the high-priest was just standing before the mercy-seat; the other was, that now Christ was offering himself to God a sacrifice for the sin of the world. The true Sacrifice was now being offered, who came expressly to die the just for the unjust, to bring us to God.

Let us consider it,

II. *In its spiritual significancy.*

What did the veil represent? It exhibited,

1. The human nature of Christ, which was now suffering for sin.

As the veil concealed the holiest place so Christ's humanity enshrouded the deity of Christ. The Godhead tabernacled in the man Jesus, see Heb. x. 20. It represented,

2. The veil of sin which separated between God and us.

Sin has broken off our fellowship with Jehovah. Separated between us. Christ died to break it down, and became the Mediator between God and man. It was by his death, which was now taking place, that this was effected; Heb. x. 19 &c.

3. It was the grand signal for the abolition of Jewish ordinances.

They never were designed to continue, they were merely shadows and types of Christ, and the blessings of the gospel. Now, therefore, the holiest in the temple ceased to possess its sacredness, now the offerings ceased to be acceptable, and now the priesthood was superseded by the Great High Priest after the order of Melchizedec.

4. It denoted the removal of all distinctions between the Jewish and Gentile nations.

God had chosen the seed of Abraham, to them he committed the oracles and ordinances, and of them Christ came, &c But the Christian economy, the foundation of which was laid in Christ's death, swept away all distinctions, and Christ's religion was designed and suited alike to all the nations that dwell on the face of the earth Let us consider,

III. *The Effects it should produce upon us.*

It should produce,

1. Reverence for the person and work of Christ.

If the veil was considered so sacred, how much more so the Holy and Blessed Redeemer. What elevated views we should have of his person, and mediatorial undertaking! It should,

2. Inspire us with confidence in the offering of Christ.

Yes, God has testified to the greatness and preciousness of Christ's sacrifice, by all the phenomena connected with his death upon the cross. We may now build

with the strongest assurance of acceptance upon what he hath effected for us.

3. We here see how our persons and all our services must be presented to God.

"By a new and living way opened by Christ, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh," &c. No man cometh to the Father, but by him. We learn, also,

4. The necessity of the veil of sin being removed from our hearts.

This veil of ignorance, unbelief, and disobedience must be removed. Christ's salvation must have an open passage into our hearts, and nature's depraved veil must be torn from the top to the bottom We are admonished,

5. That the veil of our mortal flesh must be rent, before we can enter the holiest of all.

Flesh and blood cannot enter that immaculate place. We must be unclothed before we can be clothed upon; the bodily tabernacle must be dissolved, before we can enter that "house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." And there is a happy connection subsisting between all these things. It is necessary that we have right conceptions of Christ and his work; this will tend to inspire us with confidence in his sacrificial offering; thus we shall know how to come to God; by coming to him, our sins will be blotted out, and our hearts cleansed; and thus we shall be prepared for being unclothed, and for the enjoyment of Christ in the holiest of all forever.

SKELETON LXIII.

GOD'S WAY IN THE SANCTUARY.

"Thy way, O God, is in the sanctuary."—*Psal.* lxxvii. 13.

THE Psalmist had evidently been passing through scenes of great affliction and sorrow. He seems almost to have been sinking into despondency; when he referred to God's dealings of old, and, by reflecting on his works and doings of old, his soul was cheered, and his heart comforted; he then exclaimed, "Thy way, O God, is in the sanctuary: who is so great a God as our God?" Let us,

I *Illustrate and establish the Declaration that God's way is in the Sanctuary.*

The sanctuary was that part of the tabernacle and temple where the priests officiated. It is often, however, put for the whole of God's house, and may, with propriety, be applied to every place where God's holy name is recorded, and where his people meet together for his worship The way of God signifies the manifestations of God, the revelation of his mind his visible dealings with his people, the footsteps of his providence, or the impressions of his grace. We notice, then,

1. That God's way of instruction is in the sanctuary.

All nature is intended to teach us something of his power, and wisdom, or goodness. But it is in his house where we are taught those things concerning God not to be known either in nature or providence Here, we are more fully instructed—here we are more spiritually and more clearly taught, and especially on those momentous subjects connected with the dignity and work of the Saviour, and the doctrines which affect the well-being of our souls. Life and immortality are only brought to light by the gospel.

2. God's way of conviction is in his sanctuary.

It is here that the arrows of truth are lodged in the hearts of the king's enemies. It was when Peter was declaring the doctrines of the cross, that the people cried out, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" Yes, it is in the sanctuary that souls are generally led to see and feel their sinfulness, and the necessity of salvation.

3. God's way of salvation is in his sanctuary.

It is in the sanctuary, where the heralds of salvation stand up to declare all the words of eternal life; it is here that the word of salvation is read and expounded; and it is here that thirsty souls are enabled with joy to draw water out of the wells of salvation. Yes, here the banquet of redeeming love is spread open, and perishing souls are invited to eat and drink abundantly, and live forever.

4. God's way of comfort is in his sanctuary.

Yes, God says to the watchmen of Zion the under-shepherds of his flock, "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people; speak ye comfortably unto Jerusalem, cry unto her that her warfare is accomplished," &c. Isai xl. 1, &c. David's feet well nigh

slipped, until he went to the house of God. There he obtained direction and comfort; Psal lxxiii. 1–17. Yes, here God pours into the souls of his people the oil of joy and consolation. "By waiting upon him, they renew their strength," &c.; Isai. xl. 31.

5. God's way of sanctification is in his sanctuary.

Here the servants of God "grow in grace, and in the knowledge of the truth." Work of holy experience deepened within them—conformity to Christ increased—fruits of righteousness abounding to the glory of God—and a meetness for the celestial inheritance obtained. The Church is the pillar and ground of truth; and God sanctifies his people through his truth—his word is truth; John xvii. 17. Let us,

II. *Assign some reasons why God hath his way in the Sanctuary.*

1. The sanctuary was specially designed for this.

Here God wished to reveal himself more plainly and fully to his people. Here he gives exhibitions of himself, which he does not, indeed cannot, either in nature or providence; 2 Chron. vii. 12–16. He has his way in the sanctuary,

2. Because here he is greatly honored and adored.

How delightful to see an assembly of immortal beings met specifically to glorify God! How interesting the appearance, the bended knee—the smitten breast—the uplifted eye—the fervent prayer—the humble and contrite confession—the song of praise! What a type of the heavenly assembly, &c.!

3. Because he hath declared his particular delight to be in the sanctuary, and hath given many promises to this effect.

"Wherever my name is recorded," &c.; Exod. xx. 24. 1 Kings ix. 3; Matt. xviii. 20. "For the Lord hath chosen Zion," &c.; Psal. cxxxii. 13. Let us consider,

III. *The proper Improvement we should make of this Subject.*

1. It should inspire us with ardent attachment to God's house.

"How amiable are thy tabernacles," &c. "Lord, I have loved the habitation of thy house," &c "One thing have I desired," &c.

2. It teaches us what is our chief business in the sanctuary.

To know the way of the Lord, to see his power and glory, to be more intimately acquainted with his mind and will. We may see friends, and this is pleasant; hear the word, and this is profitable; but the great end of the worship of the sanctuary is not answered, unless we know more and enjoy more of the knowledge and love of God. All other things are but means designed to lead us to this great end.

3. How anxious we should be to bring our relatives and friends into the way of the Lord.

By taking them to the Lord's house they may be blessed, truth may break in upon their minds, God may meet them in the way of conviction, and the house of God thus become the spiritual birth-place of their souls. For the way of God is in his sanctuary.

SKELETON LXIV

THE PUBLICAN.

"God be merciful to me a sinner."—*Luke* xviii. 13

Refer to the account given of the two characters; their visit to the temple; their views of themselves; opposite modes of address to God; the rejection of the one and the acceptance of the other. Notice,

I. *The Publican's Confession.*

He confessed that he was "a sinner." Refer to the generally profane character of the publicans Yet this confession contains,

1. A truth applicable to all men.

For all have sinned, &c.; all gone astray, &c.; none righteous, &c.; all guilty before God, &c.

2. This is a truth involving very momentous consequences.

Sin is rebellion, treason, contempt, and hatred of God; exposes to his displeasure wages, death; disqualifies for heaven "The soul that sinneth shall die."

3. This is a truth which it is well for us to feel and confess.

Few feel it; many try to conceal or cover their sin, extenuate it, &c. Confession of sin necessary; God requireth it; has connected it with pardon. But if we confess our sins, &c. He that confesseth &c. 1 John i. 9; Prov. xxviii. 13. Our

confession should be free, full, humble, and with contrition of heart. Notice,

II. *The Publican's Prayer.*

"God be merciful to me a sinner."

The excellence of this prayer will be evident if we consider,

1. The Being to whom it was addressed.

To God. God is the only proper object of prayer. He is the hearer and answerer of prayer. All other gods are dumb idols; and confounded are all they who trust in them.

2. It was the result of keen conviction and desire.

His eyes were opened; he saw his ruined state, his perilous condition, his imminent danger; he longed for deliverance; and to God he directed his petition; and in bitterness of spirit sought for mercy as a sinner.

3. The blessing he sought for was peculiarly appropriate.

He sought mercy, not justice; mercy, not merit, not reward. Just what every sinner needs; what God has promised; and what the gospel alone reveals. The Publican's prayer,

4. Was offered in a right state of mind.

He was evidently,

(1) Humbled before God. "Did not so much as lift up his eyes unto heaven." How necessary to feel this self-abasement! An indispensable fruit of genuine repentance. He displayed,

(2) Great earnestness and compunction of soul. He smote upon his breast. Conscious of his demerit, his vileness, yet his great anxiety to obtain forgiveness. He exhibited,

(3) Some degree of faith. Believed in God; had some confidence in his mercy, &c. His prayer,

5. Was successful.

God saw him, and heard his cry, and graciously condescended to answer his request. He rejected the proud boasting Pharisee; but the broken and contrite heart he did not despise. Those who come unto him through the person and work of his Son, he will in nowise cast out.

APPLICATION.

1. The Publican's condition is our own. 2. Let his confession and prayer be ours. And then, 3. We shall in like manner obtain mercy. 4. The self-righteous and proud in heart God will assuredly abase.

SKELETON LXV.

HUMAN EQUALITY

"The rich and poor meet together; the Lord is the maker of them all."—*Prov.* xxii. 2.

By the rich and poor, the wise man doubtless includes all ranks and degrees of men. And by meeting together, he evidently means, that they meet on common or equal ground; that, however unequal they may be in many of the distinctions of life, yet, in great and important matters, they are placed on the same level. "They meet together, for the Lord is the maker of them all." Let us,

I. *Illustrate the sentiment contained in the text.*

"The rich and poor meet together."

1. In the sameness of their origin.

For all men are equally the descendants of the first human pair. God hath made of "one blood all nations of men," &c.; Acts xvii. 26. How foolish and contemptible is pride of antiquity and superiority of descent, &c! How silly the terms *noble* and *ignoble* blood!

2. In the construction and modification of their persons.

As all have one origin, so, likewise, all possess the same common nature. There may be considerable diversity of stature, color, and feature; but all are essentially alike. Anatomists cannot discern the least difference in the construction of human beings, of whatever country or color. Heart, nerves, muscles, &c., all the same. Union of body and soul the same; the same faculties, &c. They meet together,

3. In the calamitous consequences of the fall.

By one man's disobedience all men are made sinners; all are involved in the same common depravity, guilt, and condemnation. Rom. v. 12 to end. The rich and poor meet together,

4. In the gracious arrangements of redeeming mercy.

Christ the Messiah is the kindred brother of every child of man; and his blood possesses unbounded, universal, and eternal merit and efficacy. He came expressly "that the world through him might be saved;" John iii. 17. And "by the grace of God he tasted death for every man;" Heb ii. 9. Yes, his sacrifice availeth to all colors, ranks, and degrees of men. And

there is no exclusion, but the self-exclusion of unbelief. They meet together,

5. In the field of mutual dependence and usefulness.

No created being is, or can be independent. Not only do all men depend upon God, but all are so closely united to one another, that none can say to his fellow, I have no need of thee. The rich depend upon the poor, for their labor; and the poor upon the rich for a portion of their abundance. God hath linked the whole human family together in the bonds of mutual dependence. The rich and poor meet together,

6. In the infirmities and miseries to which humanity is liable.

No station in society is exempted from disease of body or mind. Man, that is born of a woman, whether rich or poor, is exposed to trouble. Disappointment and sorrow are ingredients which are mixed in he cup of all men, from the monarch on the throne to the child born for adversity. The rich and poor meet together,

7. Within the precincts of the dark and silent tomb.

All are alike exposed and subjected to the same harbingers, agonies, &c., of death. Effects the same upon all; putrefaction and worms. The grave is the house appointed for all living. And there is no discharge in the war of mortality. The rich and poor shall meet together,

8. Around the judgment-seat of Christ.

Judgment is as certain as death; and as certain to all. Every man's bonds shall be loosened in the morning of the resurrection. All shall hear the trumpet's loud and solemn blast; and all shall stand to hear their sentence, and receive their doom. Rev. xx. 11, &c. Let us then,

II. *Attempt an improvement of the sentiment of the text.*

If the rich and poor meet together, then,

1. Let each labor to fill up his station to the glory of God and the good of mankind.

Let the poor cultivate a spirit of contentment; for "godliness with contentment is great gain;" 1 Tim. vi. 6. Besides, poverty has been sanctified by the life of Jesus, "who, though he was rich, yet for our sakes became poor," &c. Let the rich be fruitful in good works, and so expend their possessions, that they may give an account of their stewardship with joy, and not with grief. Matt. xxv. 34, &c.

2. Let there be a mutual bearing of each other's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.

> "Let each his friendly aid afford,
> And feel his brother's care."

3. Let the rich and poor meet together with kindly remembrance before the throne of grace.

How desirable that, with fervent love and compassion, we solicit heaven's blessings to descend upon our fellow-men. 1 Tim. ii. 1, &c.

4. May all be solicitous to meet together in the heavenly world.

> "O how happy we shall be,
> When our Saviour we shall see,
> Exalted on his throne!
> O, that will be joyful!
> O, that will be joyful!
> When we meet to part no more!"

SKELETON LXVI.

WEAKNESS, STRENGTH

"When I am weak, then am I strong."—2 Cor xii. 10.

THE chapter contains the apostle Paul's very peculiar experience. He refers to his glorious revelation; ver. 1, &c.: to its unspeakable nature, and the dangerous effects it was calculated to produce; ver. 3 to 7. Then he dwells on the remedy God graciously appointed; ver. 8 to 10. Then states his own approval and satisfaction with it, and assigns, as a reason, the declaration of the text: "For when I am weak, then am I strong." The apostle does not mean, that real weakness can possibly be strength; but, that a consciousness of our weakness is at all times our best security, and therefore our strength.

Observe,

I. *A reference to experienced weakness.*

"When I am weak." The Christian is often so weak, that,

1. He is unable to do what he ought.

He ought to devote all he is, and all he has, to God. God has an undivided claim upon him, and upon him every moment But how often is duty neglected or imperfectly performed! How often is he languid—flesh weak—evil present, &c.! He is often so weak,

2. That he does not perform what he desires and purposes to do.

He purposes and desires to watch; but, like the disciples, he slumbers. He is bold and determined; but afterwards follows afar off. He resolves to go to death with Christ, and if he does not deny him, yet he is not found near his cross. He groans in this tabernacle, being burdened. He is so weak,

3 That his best efforts are distinguished by frailty and imperfection.

Prayers often lifeless—no relish, no appetite, no liberty of speech. Praises listless and formal. He reads, but scarcely understands; hears, but does not retain the word; labors, but effects little; fights, but often beats the air; runs, but makes little advancement in the course. He is so weak,

4. That his enjoyments are often limited and languid.

Hope beclouded; love like the dying embers of the expiring fire; faith weak; soul discouraged; breasts of consolation dry. Now, this state of mind is not joyous, or desirable in itself; but still, it is always better to know and be fully conscious of our weakness, than to be shorn of our strength, and slumber in ignorance of it. And this leads us to notice, that the text contains,

II. *A declaration of conscious strength.*

"When I am weak, then *am I strong.*" Now, a knowledge of our weakness leads to the possession of strength, inasmuch,

1. As it produces feelings of vigilance and fear.

"Blessed is the man who *feareth* always." Such a one will not rush into danger, parley with temptation, &c. It is when we imagine that we are strong, that we are in imminent peril. Thus it was with Sampson, Job, David, Peter, &c. A sense of weakness,

2. Leads us to seek help from God, and thus we are strong.

Striking case in Jehoshaphat, 2 Chron. xx. 12. The sinking man cries for help; the lost traveller cries aloud for direction. In this way the believer stands upon the immutable Rock of Ages; and thus, God is his strong tower, and stronghold in the day of trouble.

3. A consciousness of our weakness gives us an interest in many great and precious promises.

God has promised to carry the *weak* lambs in his bosom; not to break the bruised reed, &c., not to leave, nor forsake, but to bear in his arms; to hold in his hand; to protect, as the apple of his eye; to comfort, as a mother comforteth her only son, &c. In the happy realization of these promises, the Christian finds God's grace sufficient for him; God's strength made perfect in his weakness He, therefore, glories in infirmities, and feels the force of the text: "When I am weak, then am I strong."

APPLICATION.

1. Let us cultivate an intimate knowledge of our weakness and infirmities. 2. Seek strength from God. "In all things, by prayer and supplication," &c. 3. Lay ourselves out for usefulness. By this means we shall become the subjects of that promise: "Unto him that hath, (and who improveth it,) shall be given more abundantly." 4. Let the inquiring sinner turn to the stronghold for succor and salvation

SKELETON LXVII.

THE PLACE, ETC., OF CHRIST'S DEATH

"And he bearing his cross went forth into a place called the place of a skull, which is called in the Hebrew Golgotha: where they crucified him."—*John* xix. 17, 18.

THE evangelists are very particular and minute in detailing every circumstance connected with Christ's death. At present we design to contemplate, more especially, three things. I. The place. II. The manner. And, III. The astonishing phenomena with which it was attended.

Notice then,

I. *The place of Christ's death.*

"Golgotha," the place of skulls; where lay scattered abroad the remains of malefactors who had suffered on the spot. In this place we behold,

1. A striking emblem of the world Christ came to save.

Here were the trophies of death— the ruins of human nature; here were sufficient evidences of man's depravity, ruin, and helplessness. And such was the condition of the world Christ came to redeem —one region of death—one dreary burial-ground—one vast Golgotha; sunk in depravity; exposed to peril the most alarming; and, to human contemplation, in a

condition of helplessness. In Golgotha, the place of Christ's death, we see,

2. Jewish malice and unbelief overruled for the welfare of the world.

Jesus came expressly to his own, to his own people, the lost sheep of Israel; but they received him not; but hated him, and persecuted him, and at last put him to death—and thrust him without the gate of their city. Jesus did not then offer himself upon a Jewish altar, and thus restrict the merit of his blood to one people; but on the elevated mount of Calvary—on the notorious summit Golgotha, he expired as the propitiation for the sins of the world.

3. We see in it not only the extent, but the efficacy of Christ's death.

Christ "came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." He lived and died for the very chief of transgressors. His death at Golgotha speaks the language of hope to harlots, publicans, and thieves. And we know, that shortly afterwards, the virtue of his blood was savingly experienced by three thousand Jerusalem sinners.

Observe,

II. *The manner of Christ's death.*

"Where they crucified him." Crucifixion was a Roman punishment, and was only employed in cases of extreme notoriety; the sufferers were generally slaves, who had been guilty of aggravated robberies or murder. This death the blessed Jesus endured. Observe,

1. That it was a death the most shameful.

Associated with the vilest and most worthless of our race; exposure of person, &c.; identified with all that was degrading and infamous.

2. It was a death of excruciating agony.

The body stretched upon transverse pieces of wood; most tender parts torn with the rude nails by which they were fastened. The body thus suspended, scorching thirst would burn up the system; fever would be produced; and finally, exhaustion, delirium, and death.

3. It was peculiarly lingering in its character.

Often several hours elapsed before death would release the sufferer. Christ hung on the cross, enduring all its pain, six hours, from about nine in the morning until three in the afternoon. What a spectacle of suffering and wo!

"O Lamb of God, was ever love,
Was ever grief, like thine?"

Let us then,

III. *Glance at the astonishing phenomena with which Christ's death was attended.*

There was then,

1. The preternatural darkness.

The sun was darkened; whole land involved in sable gloom; not by an eclipse for it was now full moon, and therefore, if at all possible, could not have lasted for more than a few minutes, this for three hours. Now, indeed, was the hour of darkness; when hell expected to triumph; but when, in fact, the domains of perdition were shaken to their foundations. The conflict was tremendous. The sun refused to give its light, or be a spectator of the momentous scene. Christ's soul, too, was now enduring the absence of Jehovah's smile. Hence the bitter, inexplicable cry "My God, my God," &c.

2. The rocks rent, and the earth quaked.

Indicating the removal of the old, and the introduction of a new dispensation.

3. The graves were opened.

For Christ was now abolishing death, by overcoming him who had the power of death, even the devil.

4. The veil of the temple was rent in twain.

Priests dismissed; legal dispensation, with all its altars, abrogated; separating wall between Jews and Gentiles thrown down, and way opened to the holiest of all.

APPLICATION

We have in the place and manner of Christ's death, 1. Exhibited to us God's displeasure against sin, yet his mercy to the sinner. 2. We perceive the only refuge for the guilty and condemned.

"The wounds of Jesus, for their sin,
Before the world's foundation slain."

3. The saint's only hope and glory. "God forbid that I glory," &c.

SKELETON LXVIII.

FAMILY WORSHIP

"For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him; and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment."—*Gen.* xviii. 19.

Let us consider the subject of family worship,

I. *In the grounds and propriety of it*

Many persons have thought themselves justified in neglecting it, on the ground of there being no express law and direction for it in the divine word. We think, however, that its propriety will be obviously manifest to the sincere and candid Christian, from the following considerations:

1 Is it not grounded on the laws of our nature?

God has stamped upon human nature the principle of parental regard and affection. Hence, parents feel pleasure in toiling to supply the wants of their offspring. He who neglects this does violence to his own nature, denies the faith, and is worse than an infidel. But are the minds, the precious souls of our children, of less value and importance than their bodies? Can it be supposed, that the cabinet is to absorb our care, and that the jewel is to be neglected? Is there to be no moral, no spiritual training, or instruction? We think, when the subject is viewed in this light, reasoning and argument are altogether unnecessary.

2. Have we not Scriptural precedents?

There is the very striking case of Abraham in the text, with God's high approbation of it; the case of Job, i. 5; of Joshua —"As for me and my house," &c., Josh. xxiv. 15; of David, 2 Sam. vi. 20; of Cornelius, Acts x. 2, &c

3. Is it not grounded on the absolute laws of propriety?

Have we not family sins to confess? Family mercies to acknowledge? Family deliverances to celebrate? Family blessings to seek? And can we consistently attend to all these obvious duties, and neglect family worship?

4. Are not those who neglect it reproved by the conduct of the heathen?

For it is well known that, in almost every classification of paganism, household worship has a prominent place. Scarcely a branch of idolatry without family altars and family gods. And shall the families who worship the true and living Jehovah not acknowledge, not worship, not bless God in their family capacity? We blush for such professing Christians, and fear the neglect has much to do with the bad state of the heart, rather than the imperfect knowledge of the mind. Let us consider,

II. *What family worship should comprise.*

1. The reading of the Holy Scriptures.

Deut. vi. 6, 7, &c. Especially the Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and the Gospels, and the Epistles of the New Testament. It should include,

2. Songs of holy praise.

This should never be neglected, unless there are none who can conduct it. And then, would it not be proper to read aloud some of the beautifully versified compositions of the sweet singer of Israel? Col iii. 16; Psal. cxviii. 15.

3. The offering up of prayer and supplication for ourselves, friends, church, and the world.

Let us consider,

III. *The mode in which it should be conducted.*

1. As to times and frequency.

Morning and evening if possible; at least, once a day.

2. The services should be short and varied.

So as not to tire and fatigue those younger branches of the family who cannot be expected to feel much interest in it. Great wisdom and care are necessary, or the summons to the family altar will always throw a gloom over the buoyant, joyous, minds of children. Perhaps ten minutes ought never to be exceeded, except where there are no children.

3. All the members of the family, if possible, should be present

They are all God's creatures, sinners, redeemed, stand in need of the divine favor, &c. Masters and servants, parents and children, are all alike precious to God.

4. It should be conducted with regularity and constancy.

Order is the law of heaven It should, also, be the law of every heaven-born family. Notice,

IV. *The advantages which we may expect to derive from it.*

We may reasonably expect,

1. An increase of family knowledge.

We cannot read and hear the divine word daily, without increasing in religious knowledge.

2. The general possession of family harmony.

There is nothing like the tree of family worship, for removing the bitterness of the waters of domestic strife. All unhallowed disputes and differences are best settled on the knees before God.

3. An exemption from family calamities and the enjoyment of family blessedness.

God's fury is threatened upon the fami

ies who call not on his name Jer. x. 25. But there are many great and blessed declarations to the families of the righteous; Psal. cxxviii; Jer. xxxi. 1. Let us,

V. *Reply to some objections made against family worship.*

Many object,

1. For want of time.

This is a most thoughtless and unprincipled objection.

Not time to acknowledge God—to bless him—to seek his favor? David and Daniel found time; so do Jews and Mahomedans. Others object,

2. For want of ability.

You can read; and if you cannot pray extempore, you can read some of those excellent prayers written by good men for he aid of weakly or diffident Christians. Remember, however, God does not require fine services, but sincere, hearty ones. And some object, saying, it is,

3. Not essential.

We refer again to Jer. x. 25. It does appear essential to family order, safety, comfort. It does appear essential to Christian consistency. It does appear indispensable to devotional benevolent minds.

APPLICATION.

1. Press this duty upon pious fathers and mothers. 2. Let young Christians prize it, and improve it. 3. What is heaven, but one grand family, where worship is ever celebrated? "They rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy Lord God Almighty, who was, and is, and s to come," &c.; Rev. iv. 8–11.

SKELETON LXIX.

THE HEART WHICH GOD WILL NOT DESPISE.

"A broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise."—*Psalm* li. 17.

This Psalm presents a fine and interesting specimen of the experience of a soul truly awakened to a sense of his sin and misery, and really solicitous to enjoy pardon, and the favor of God. What a free and full confession of sin is made; ver. 6. What earnest supplications for the renewing influences of divine grace; ver. 6–10. And how divine abandonment is deprecated; ver 11. And what resolutions to honor God, and to declare his goodness are formed; ver. 13. And at last, as if some ray of heavenly light had broken in upon his comfortless mind, he expresses the confidential language of the text, "A broken and a contrite heart," &c. We shall,

I. *Endeavor to describe the Broken and Contrite Heart.*

The brokenness of heart specified in the text is of a spiritual kind. Many are so through the losses, and sorrows, and afflictions of this life. Sorrow of the world worketh death, in a religious and spiritual sense. A broken and contrite heart is,

1. Thoroughly convinced of sin.

Many verbally acknowledge themselves sinners, who do not feel, really and deeply feel, their fallen and miserable state before God. How necessary to know the plague of our hearts! How necessary to have a right discernment of our depravity, wretchedness, and danger! A broken and a contrite heart,

2. Feels deeply affected, as well as thoroughly convinced of sin.

Heart melted down. Soul dissolved before God. The native callousness and obduracy of spirit removed. A keen sensibility of heart arising from the baseness of our sins, in having grieved the best of beings. Holy compunction of soul. Genuine sorrow and grief of spirit.

A broken heart is,

3. Deeply humbled before God.

Self-importance relinquished—soul in sackcloth and ashes—God greatly feared—self-abhorred, loathed, &c.

A broken and contrite heart,

4. Will make a free and hearty confession of sin.

Look at the preceding part of this psalm Look at the publican,—the prodigal, &c A broken and contrite heart will,

5. Earnestly seek and supplicate deliverance.

Behold this in Manasseh. See also vers. 9–12. The three thousand broken-hearted Jews were truly anxious what they should do. So Saul. So the jailer. So of every truly contrite soul, it will be said, "Behold, he prayeth." Let us, then,

II. *Encourage the Broken and Contrite Heart.*

"A broken and contrite heart *God will not despise.*" No, he will look upon it with pity, with compassion; he will con

descend to hear its groans—to listen to its cries—to heal the broken in heart. He will turn sorrow into joy—night into day. He will save—he will rejoice over it with singing, &c.

We may rest assured, that he will thus treat the broken and contrite heart,

1. From a reference to the divine perfections.

The Lord is good. God is love. Merciful, gracious, abundant in goodness and truth. Full of compassion—of great pity—who *delighteth* in mercy—whose bowels yearn with tender regard over his miserable creatures.

2. From a reference to divine declarations.

See Psalm xxxiv. 18; Isaiah i. 18; lvii. 15, and lxvi. 2; Matt. xi. 28.

3. By a reference to the divine conduct towards those of a broken and a contrite heart.

Manasseh—David—publican—woman that was a sinner—Zaccheus—publicans and sinners, in Christ's time—thief upon the cross—three thousand in Jerusalem—Saul of Tarsus—the Corinthians, &c. Never has there been one instance where the text has not been verified—never a single exception to the truth, that a broken and contrite heart, &c.

4. By a reference to divine arrangements.

Wherefore, if the text is not true, did God devise the scheme of reconciliation? Wherefore did God send his Son—word—Spirit—heralds? Wherefore appoint sabbaths and ordinances? All these are testimonies of his strong love, of his sincere regard for us, and corroborate the truth of the text, "A broken and a contrite heart," &c. Be assured, then, by all that is blessed in the divine perfections—by all that is true in the divine declarations—by all that is illustriously merciful in the divine conduct—and by all that is benevolent, and tender, and consistent in the divine arrangements, that "a broken and contrite heart God will not despise."

Let us then,

III. *Direct the Broken and Contrite in Heart.*

1. Let all sin be abandoned.

He says, Turn ye from your evil ways, and live. Let the wicked forsake his way, &c.

2 Humbly wait upon God

He exhorts you to draw nigh to him—to call upon him, &c.; Psalmist did this Psal. xl. 1, &c.

3. Heartily and entirely rest upon the person and merits of his Son for acceptance.

Christ is the only way of access. His blood, the only ground. His name, the only plea.

4. Put on Jesus Christ before men, and be his decided and avowed disciples.

If any man will be my disciple, let him come after me, and take up his cross and follow me.

APPLICATION

1. The proud, ignorant, and unbelieving in heart must perish. 2. Let the subject lead the indifferent to consideration and seriousness. 3. Let the humble and contrite hope in God, and seek and obtain mercy.

SKELETON LXX.

CHRIST'S ENCOURAGING OBSERVATIONS RESPECTING CHILDREN.

"Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven."—*Matt.* xix. 14.

Notice the desire of the parents to bring their children to Christ. The opposition of the disciples. The kind attention and affectionate interference of Jesus. Let us consider,

I. *To what, in Christ, little Children may and should be brought.*

"For Jesus said, Suffer little children to come unto me," &c.

1. They should come unto the knowledge of Christ.

For children to be ignorant of Christ is not good. Nay, it is injurious, dangerous, &c. Children may, at an early age, know much of Christ. Are very soon capable of this. Now there are two ways of effecting it. By teaching them to read Christ's blessed history, and by bringing them to hear the preached gospel. Both of which should be accompanied by kind and simple explanations and illustrations.

2. They should come to the love of Christ.

And as soon as ever they are capable of knowing him, they are also capable of

oving him. Many very young children have experienced what it is to love, and what it is to be loved of, Christ.

3. They should come to an imitation of Christ.

Jesus presents a model for universal imitation. His early piety—his respect to his parents' authority—his devotion—his holy conversation—his goodness, pity, &c. —all these, children are to be called upon to imitate. And some children have imitated Jesus, and walked in many things as he walked.

4. They should be brought into the kingdom of Christ.

Into his church. For however early, when we have evidence of children possessing the knowledge and love of Christ, they are undoubtedly fit to be united to his people, and to enjoy fellowship in all the privileges and ordinances of his family.

II. *The Reason Christ assigned why little Children should come unto Him.*

" For of such is the kingdom of heaven."

1. Little children may be saved.

Many have been saved; and lived to be ornaments to his church, and blessings to the world.

2. Many children have died very happy.

How many very precious testimonials have they left behind, of their peace, and joy, and hope in the day of sickness and hour of death!

3. Little children will form a great proportion of the heavenly company.

We think it quite unnecessary to advance arguments in support of infant salvation: the opposite sentiment, though once popular, is now nearly exploded. Christ's conduct, as expressed in the text, is more than a sufficient reply to all the reasoning ever advanced.

4. We must all be brought to a resemblance of little children, before we can enter the kingdom of God.

Matt. xiii. 15; xviii. 3.

APPLICATION.

1. Let us learn to form a proper estimate of the value of children. 2. Let us consider well their capability for knowledge, happiness, and salvation. 3. Employ all our influence in promoting their best interests. Our love to them—to Jesus—to his church—to the world, are sufficient incentives to this blessed work.

SKETCH LI

CHRIST'S LAMENTATION ON THE CROSS.

" My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"—*Matt.* xxvii. 46.

THERE was nothing which occurred at Calvary more strange and deeply mysterious, than the bitter exclamation which we have adopted as a text. Jesus had been so gloriously recognised and honored by his heavenly Father at his baptism, and on the mount of transfiguration, that we naturally feel astonished at his desertion in that most important and solemn of all moments, when he was yielding up the ghost, and sinking into the cold arms of mortality Let us then make it the subject of our serious meditation, and consider,

I. *The Time and Circumstances of Messiah's Complaint.*

1. The time of Messiah's complaint.

It was about the ninth hour, or three in the afternoon. Jesus had now been suspended six hours upon the cross. He had been enduring an exceedingly painful, yet lingering death. Darkness had covered the whole land three hours. And it is supposed that during these three hours Jesus had not uttered a single sentence. At length the long silence is broken, and he exclaims, " My God," &c.

Observe,

2. The manner of his exclamation

" He cried with a loud voice." Indicating that he was still possessed of full power; that nature was not, as in ordinary cases, exhausted. And that his life could not be forced from him; but that he had power to lay it down, and also power to take it up again. As a sacrifice for sin, it was indispensably necessary that it should be his own free and voluntary act.

3. His exclamation was that of scripture prophecy.

Psalm xxii. This was he case, also when he commenced his ministry—when he was tempted—when reasoning with the Jews—when referring to his sufferings and death; Luke xxiv. 46–48.

4. It was language indicating his claim to the Messiahship.

He had ever professed to be the Son, the sent of the Father, the Saviour of the world He had been condemned for this—was now dying for this. And he still claims

ehovah as his God with his expiring breath, My God, my God," &c.

5. It was the only complaint he uttered upon the cross.

He did not complain of the apostacy of his friends—of the treachery of Judas—of Peter's denial—of Pilate's sentence—of the scourging—the rudeness of the rabble—he complained not, when nailed to the wood: but when he felt the mental and spiritual darkness, he was overwhelmed, and in utter amazement and intense agony cried, 'My God, my God," &c. Let us consider,

II. *The Nature of his Complaint.*

We are not to suppose that the divine was now separated from the human nature of Christ. Nor yet that God did not delight in him and love him as intensely as ever. Christ was never more dear and precious to the Father than at this time. But,

1. He was now deprived of the joys of his Father's presence.

He was now offering up his soul as a sacrifice for sin. It, therefore, behooved him to experience the dreadful penalty of sin, as it consists in excluding the soul from the favor of God. As man's Surety and Mediator, it was necessary that he should experience the judicial hidings of his Father's face.

2. He had now completed all his engagements, and therefore claimed the approval of his Father.

It is generally thought that Christ's soul had been judicially forsaken for three hours. He now, therefore, appeals, as if he had said, O Father, the cup is now exhausted—the whole demand has been met: therefore now let thy cheering beams return; now let me have the token of thy accepting love. "My God, my God," &c.

3. After all, it was the cry of confidence.

He knew his unalienable interest in his Father's regard; and was satisfied that his Father always loved and therefore would always hear him; he exclaimed, "My God, my God," &c. Let us consider,

III. *The Instruction which we derive from Christ's Complaint upon the Cross.*

We learn,

1. The ability and sufficiency of Christ as a Saviour.

Jesus overcame singly all our and all his own adversaries. Proved himself mighty to save.

2. The qualification he possesses as our great High Priest.

He knows what poverty, temptation, calumny, persecution, death, and desertion mean;

"For he hath felt the same."

3. We learn the infinite evil of sin.

When Christ, as our substitute, had it pressing upon his holy soul, it caused him to exclaim, "My God," &c.

4. The essential value of God's reconciled countenance.

How necessary to us in life! but more so in adversity, in sickness, in death, and in eternity. Bless God! we may obtain it and enjoy it through faith in his Son. He is the way to the Father; and whosoever comes to God through him, shall in no wise be cast out.

5. The claims of Christ upon us.

What has he not a right to possess? He deserves our body, spirit, soul, our all, both in time and in eternity.

Let us then love, honor, and obey him. that at last we may join the heavenly hosts, and praise him forever.

SKETCH LII.

PAUL'S CHARGE TO THE CORINTHIANS

"Watch ye; stand fast in the faith; quit you like men; be strong."—1 *Cor.* xvi. 13.

THE language of the text is quite of a martial description. We should at once presume it to be the address of a general to his troops; as if he were saying to them: Don't neglect guard; see that the sentinels do their duty. Be firm and unyielding as valiant men; and bring all your united energies to bear against the common enemy: be strong.

Now believers are soldiers, soldiers of Christ's cross; and it is under this metaphorical representation that the text is addressed to them. Let us then, I. *Explain and illustrate the charge given.* And, II. *Enforce it by a variety of motives.*

Let us then,

I. *Explain and illustrate the charge given.*

The charge consists of four parts.

1. Vigilance.

"Watch ye." This is the opposite of apathy and sloth; the opposite of indifference and slumber; a duty often enjoined

and of essential importance. This will be obviously both our duty and interest, when we reflect,

(1) Upon the subtlety of our adversaries. Especially Satan, of whose devices we are not ignorant.

(2) Our position is critical. Passing through the country of the enemy. He is called the god of this world. Here he has his seat. Here he goeth about, &c.

(3) Our own hearts are deceitful. The strongest have been overcome; the wisest, deceived; the holiest, ensnared; the boldest, intimidated. For proofs, we refer to Sampson, David, Solomon, Peter, &c.

How necessary, then, that we be vigilant! The next part of the charge is,

2. Constancy.

"Stand fast in the faith." Do not abandon your posts of trust and honor. Stand fast,

(1) On Christ, the foundation of faith. "Other foundation can no man lay," &c. All else is yielding sand Here only is there firm foothold. Stand fast,

(2) By the standard of faith; which is the Holy Scriptures. "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly," &c. "To the law and to the testimony," &c. Stand fast,

(3) In the exercise of faith. As the *eye* of the spiritual mind, it must ever be directed to the cross—"Looking unto Jesus," &c. As the *hand* of the soul, it must hold fast the horn of salvation, and it must distinguish all our reading, hearing, praising, praying, fighting, &c. We must live by faith in the Son of God, &c. This charge comprises,

3. Manliness.

"Quit you like men." Avoid all that is childish, and trifling, and fanciful.

(1) Be prudent as men. In understanding and knowledge, men. Wisdom very essential, &c.

(2) Decided as men. Not wavering, not changing and fickle, as the child; but resolved and determined as men.

(3) Courageous as men. Not timid and fearful as children; but full of holy boldness and resolution.

This charge includes,

4. Strength.

"Be strong." Not in yourselves, but in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. Strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might The Christian's sufficiency is of God.

(1) Be increasingly strong. Grow in grace, &c. Go on from babes to young men, &c. Use all the means to attain strength.

(2) Be practically strong. Lay it out Devote it to God. In all duties and difficulties bring all your strength to bear upon them, and thus be strong.

(3) Be perseveringly strong. Go from strength to strength, from conquering to conquer, &c., till the alarm of war be exchanged for the shout of victory and triumph.

Let us then,

I. *Enforce the Charge by a variety of Motives.*

We press the charge upon you,

1. Because your cause is good.

Cause of truth, of righteousness, of salvation, of God. No tyranny nor despotism associated with it. No misgivings on account of its oppressive character.

2. Your Captain is great.

Jesus is the Captain of salvation, Heb. ii. 10; He is the Bozrah Conqueror, the Spoiler of hell, Satan, and death. Invincibility is engraven on his shield, and Immortality on his banners.

3. Your armory is perfect.

Every weapon, both defensive and offensive, is provided for you. See Eph. vi. 13. Every part of the Christian's person is protected, except the back; and therefore he cannot sustain injury unless it be in retreating.

4. Your provision is abundant.

Not called to go a warfare at your own charges My God shall supply all your need," &c

5. The victory is certain.

This is more than any earthly warrior can say. But here it may confidently be said, Fighting is conquest: conflict is triumph. "Nay, in all these things we are *more* than conquerors," &c.; Rom. viii 37, &c.

6. The reward will be glorious.

Refer to three passages: "Fight the good fight of faith; lay hold of *eternal* life." "Be thou faithful unto death," &c. "Him that overcometh," &c. 1 Tim. vi. 12 Rev. ii. 10, iii. 21

SKETCH LIII.

THE BRAZEN SERPENT.

"And Moses made a serpent of brass, and put it upon a pole; and it came to pass, that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass he lived."—*Numb.* xxi. 9.

THAT the brazen serpent was intended to typify the Lord Jesus Christ, is placed beyond all doubt from Christ's selection of the subject, and application of it to himself, in his conversation with Nicodemus. Indeed, we cannot conceive of any thing more descriptive of our fallen state, and the divine mode of our restoration, than the history of the diseased and dying Israelites, and their recovery by means of the remedy God so mercifully provided for them. Let us,

I. *Notice their Disease.*

The occasion was their murmuring against God. The result of which was, that God sent fiery serpents among them, the bite of which was painful and fatal. Now observe,

1. Sin was introduced into our world by he Old Serpent the devil.

He beguiled Eve, and she did eat. Hence he is called "a liar and murderer from the beginning."

2. Sin was introduced by a fiery serpent.

Whether we regard the expression as referring to the bright and dazzling appearance of the tempter, (for did he not appear as an angel of light?) or to the fiery and painful effects of sin upon the human system. Yes, it is as fire in the soul, scorching it up, and filling it with bitterness, and pain, and dread. Isaiah says, "For wickedness burneth as the fire;" ix. 18.

3. Sin is fatal in its effects.

Its deadly poison has affected the whole man. Soul now spiritually dead; dead in trespasses and sin; dead to God and all that is spiritual; exposed to the bitter pains of eternal death. "The soul that sinneth," &c. "Sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death." "The wages of sin," &c. There is this difference with respect to the bite of the serpent and the influence of sin, that while some of the Israelites might escape the one, every soul of man is affected by the other. "All have sinned," &c Not one human being ever escaped. Whole world guilty before God. Notice,

II. *The Remedy.*

"And Moses made a serpent of brass,' &c. Now you will observe, that the remedies in both cases,

1. Were divine.

It was the Lord who commanded Moses, &c.; see ver. 8. Jesus, as the Saviour of the world, was provided, promised, and sent by the Father God only was sufficient to meet the ruined exigency of the sinner in the provision of a Saviour. No mind was at work, but the mind of God; no power, no benevolence, no mercy, but the power, benevolence, and mercy of God. "God gave his Son," &c. "The Father sent the Son," &c. Observe,

2. The striking resemblance between the agents.

A serpent inflicted the wound, and a brazen serpent is the remedy. By man, the first Adam, came sin; he received its poison into himself, and has diffused it through all his posterity. By man, even the second Adam, comes justification unto life; a full remedy for all the ills and woes sin had produced. By the first Adam's ignorance we became dark; by his pride presumptuous; by his disobedience, rebels; by his depravity, diseased; through his sin, beneath the curse. By the second Adam's wisdom we have knowledge; by his humiliation we have hope; by his obedience we have righteousness; by his wounds, health; and through him, as a curse for us, everlasting life

3. Both the agents were to be lifted up.

The serpent of brass was to be placed upon a pole within the camp. So Christ was lifted up upon the cross in the presence of the thousands of Israel; and there was a necessity for this; Jesus said, 'So the Son of man must be lifted up," &c. "It behooved Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead," &c. And as it was necessary for Christ to be lifted up upon the cross, so also must Christ be lifted up on the pole of a preached gospel; and his suffering elevation on Calvary was in order that he might be placed before the world as a Saviour, to give repentance and remission of sins.

Then observe,

III. *The application of the Remedies.*

In both cases it is the same; by *looking* in the one case, with the eye of sense; in the other, with the eye of faith. The mode of application was in both cases,

1. Easy.

Nothing laborious nor difficult Not by works of suffering, or obedience. No self-inflicted tortures required, &c. Simply, "Behold the Lamb of God," &c. In both cases the remedy was,

2. Gratuitous.

No price demanded; God's free gift. And thus brought to the level of the most poor and wretched. "Come, buy wine and milk," &c. Both remedies,

3. Were not partial but general.

The serpent was lifted up for all the camp. Christ, for the whole world. None exempted or excluded. Whosoever looked, &c. Whosoever believeth, &c. Observe,

4. The direct similarity between their looking and our believing.

In both cases,

(1) An object must be provided.

(2) It must be placed before us.

(3) We must possess organs of vision.

(4) A testimony and warrant must be given.

Now Jesus is provided, placed before us, we are capable of receiving him; and we have God's testimony, that through believing on him we shall have everlasting life

Observe,

IV. *The Success of both Remedies.*

"When he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived." "Whosoever believeth should not perish, but have everlasting life."

1. Life in both cases was the blessed result.

Deliverance from pain and death. Restoration to health and happiness. But how superior the life of the soul! Deliverance from condemnation, from the body of sin and death, and from the wrath to come.

2. Life was the result, however diseased or dangerous.

"Christ able to save to the uttermost," and the "chief of sinners." See the dying thief expiring in two respects by his side.

3. Life was the result, though only one feeble glance was directed to the remedy.

So, if our faith is but as a grain of mustard seed, &c.; as one of old: "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief." Yes, one glance at the cross brings healing, and comfort, and salvation to the soul.

APPLICATION.

1 Urge sinners to come to the only remedy. By the wretchedness of their state, by the imminent peril to which they are exposed, and by the impossibility of being saved in any other way.

2. Let believers rejoice and glory in Christ crucified, and invite all around to the same source of happiness and salvation.

3. We see the grand leading theme of pulpit ministrations. To exalt Christ; to publish Christ; to invite men to Christ; and to say to the dying children of men

> "Fly, sinners, fly into those arms
> Of everlasting love!"

SKETCH LIV.

THE MINISTERIAL SOWER

"He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him."—*Psal.* cxxvi. 6.

We intend to apply the text to the office and labors of the Christian minister; and in so doing, we shall consider him, I. In his Labors. And, II. In his Success.

Let us consider the Christian minister,

I. *In his Labors.*

He is a sower; he bears precious seed; he goes forth bearing precious seed, and weepeth.

1. He is a sower.

Ministers are sometimes called shepherds — watchmen — overseers— laborers together with God—builders—fishers. The Saviour represents them as sowers; Matt. xiii. 3, &c. And this office is,

(1) One of appointment. God calls, and qualifies and sends out those whom he desires should preach his gospel and build up his church. Men do not put themselves into the Christian vineyard. It is an office,

(2) Of skill. Wisdom is necessary. Hence, the apostle speaks of himself as a wise master-builder. Christian ministers have to do with all the ignorance and depravity of the heart; and are opposed in their labors by all the wiles and stratagems of the devil. It is an office,

(3) Of toil. None ever associates in dolence with the labors of the husbandman who traverses the furrows of his land from morning to night. Hirelings of the gospel may be careless; but the faithful servant of God will be wholly given up to his great work. All he has, and all he is, will be

cheerfully laid as a reasonable service upon the altar of God. Let us notice,

2. The seed he bears.

'Bearing precious seed." The seed is the gospel, the word of the kingdom, the truth as it is in Jesus. Like seed, it is small in appearance, and to the eye of sense quite inadequate to produce the effects designed. It has nothing of the glare and pomp of philosophy about it; a stumbling-block to the Jew, and foolishness to the Greek, &c.; yet this seed is precious. It is so,

(1) In its origin. It is the production of heaven; it is the word of God; and it bears the express likeness of its great Author.

(2) It is so in its rarity. There is nothing in heaven or earth like it, or partaking of its properties. As there is only one God, one Mediator, one Spirit, and one Church; so there is only one gospel, one precious species of seed, for the cultivation of our dreary wilderness-world.

(3) It is precious in itself. Compared to the finest silver, to the purest gold; pearl of great price; so valuable is it, that the man is wise who sells all to possess it. It is precious as light; it is the golden grain of a dying world; it is the word of salvation—and of eternal life.

(4) It is precious in its effects. Power of God to salvation. It is the instrument of our deliverance from the thraldom of sin: "Ye shall know the truth," &c.; John vii. 32. It is the instrument of our regeneration: "Born again of the incorruptible seed," &c.; 1 Peter i. 23. It is the means of our sanctification: "Sanctify them through thy truth," &c.; John xvii. 17. And oh, how fertilizing and gladdening are its effects upon our world! The desert becomes a fruitful field; and the wilderness, the garden of the Lord! Observe, it is said of the sower,

3. That he goes forth bearing precious seed.

That is, that he seeks for spheres of usefulness; that he does not wait for men to seek him, but goes forth to exhibit, to publish, and to offer it; that he goes out, as Jesus did, to seek the lost, and to offer them Christ's salvation. And in going forth, he does so,

(1) In the name and strength of the Lord Jesus. All in religion must be done in his blessed name. We meet in his name—pray in his name—offer salvation in his name; Luke xxiv. 47; Acts iii. 16 The disciples cast out devils, healed the sick, &c., in Christ's name.

(2) They go forth cheerfully. No reluctantly, but of a willing mind.

(3) They go forth zealously. Burn with zeal and love to God, and the souls of perishing men.

(4) They go forth with diligent constancy. They labor as under the eye of God, and as those who must give an account.

(5) They go forth perseveringly. In the morning they sow their seed, and in the evening withhold not their hand: instant in season, and out of season; until their day ends, and they enter into their rest

Let us notice,

4. The sorrow attendant upon ministerial exertion.

"He that goeth forth and weepeth." This sorrow arises,

(1) From the solemn nature of their calling. They have to do with precious immortal souls: enough to fill an angel's hand, or to absorb a seraph's heart.

(2) From their numerous and painful disappointments. Hope often excited, and then blasted; pleasant appearances of success, and then, like Ephraim and Judah of old, goodness as the early cloud and morning dew, &c. See the parable of the sower. Some fell on stony ground—wayside—some among thorns, &c. Paul and the Galatians; Christ and the rich young man.

(3) Their own weakness and insufficiency. Who is sufficient for these things? They have the same infirmities and weaknesses as other men; men of like passions, &c.; earthen vessels, &c.; often overwhelmed with their responsibilities, and they dare not give up: "Wo unto me, if I preach not the gospel," &c. Well, what do they do? They go forth weeping, &c.

Let us, then, consider the Christian minister,

II. *In his Success.*

"He shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him."

1. He shall come again.

To his closet, to his study, for fresh supplies of the golden grain. He shall come again, finally, to his Lord and master at the end of the day, and deliver up his ac-

counts, surrender his charge, await the reckoning, &c.

2. He shall return with rejoicing.

He has fought the fight—endured the toil—run the course—reached the goal—and gained the prize. O yes, he sowed in tears, but now reaps in joy. Then, there is the cause of his rejoicing.

3. He shall return rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him.

Yes: this will be the grand cause of his exultation, that he has not labored in vain; that some seed has fallen upon good ground, and yielded fruit, thirty, sixty, and an hundred fold; while laboring in the field, much fruit might be gathered home before him; and when he was called to his rest, he might leave much to ripen after his decease; but in the great day he shall return, bringing his sheaves with him. All whom he has begotten in the gospel shall be presented before God, and be his crown of rejoicing in the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ.

APPLICATION.

We learn then,

1. The Christian minister's duty. It is to sow precious seed; to go forth, and, with diligence and assiduous earnestness, to make men acquainted with the gospel of Christ.

2. The Christian minister's prospect. O, how joyous, how delightful, when his warfare is over, when his toil is ended, to return with great rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him; while the world's harvest-hymn is sung by myriads of redeemed souls; and when Christ shall confer upon him the crown of glory which fadeth not away! Let such a prospect reconcile to toil, to sorrow, to suffering. "For we reckon, that the sufferings of the present time," &c.; Rom. viii. 18.

SKETCH LV.

GRATITUDE AND COURAGE.

(An Anniversary Sketch.)

"He thanked God, and took courage."
Acts xxviii. 15.

PAUL was now a prisoner, and on his journey to Rome. That journey had been connected with many very striking events. The good providence of God had been signally displayed towards him from its commencement to its termination. He had now nearly arrived at its conclusion, when the brethren at Rome, being apprized of it, went to meet him; some of them to Appii Forum; others, to the Three Taverns; the former place about fifty-two miles, and the latter about thirty-three miles, from Rome. This evidence of affection, on the part of his brethren, greatly refreshed his soul; as iron sharpeneth iron, so did the countenance of these rejoice the heart of the apostle. For when he saw them, "he thanked God, and took courage."

Let us notice, I. The Apostle's Conduct respecting the Past.—"He thanked God." And, II. His Feelings in reference to the Future.—"He took courage."

I. *The Apostle's Conduct respecting the Past.*

"He thanked God."

Now the apostle's conduct is a model for the imitation of believers personally, or of the church in her collective capacity. Let us consider it at present under the latter aspect, as including the conduct of Christ's body, the church, and more especially as expressing the sentiments of that department of his church assembling regularly within these walls. Now, here two things are necessarily included: the grounds, and the manner, of our thanking God.

1. The grounds of our thanking God.

We should thank God,

(1) For our existence as a Christian church. The Lord hath made us a people, who were not a people, &c. There was a time when each and all of us were in the rude quarry of nature. Strangers, and foreigners, and aliens; without God, and without hope, and without Christ in the world. God called, and convinced and saved us, collected us together, made us lively stones of his own spiritual house, and members of his family, and of the household of God. "This is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes!" We should thank God,

(2) For our preservation as a church to this day. The emblems of the church are, a *vessel* at sea, exposed to the tempest and the storm—a *bush* enveloped in flames—a *city* besieged with powerful and malignant foes. God, notwithstanding, has preserved us. Jesus has slept in the vessel and

when shipwreck seemed inevitable, has rebuked the sea, and hushed the storm to rest. God has spoken out of the bush; and the flames have not devoured, but purified his people. The Lord has dwelt in Zion; and has been round about her, as a wall of fire, and the glory in the midst of her. We should thank God,

(3) For the comforts and enjoyments his church has afforded us. How often has it been to us a happy retreat from the world, from its cares, and anxieties, and dangers! How often has it been to us a cooling shade in time of heat—a refuge in time of storms! How often have we sat under his shadow, and his fruit has been sweet to our taste, and his banner over us has been love! Have we not found it often to be Beth-el to our souls—the gate of heaven—and we have sung the lines of the poet:

> "My willing soul would stay,
> In such a frame as this,
> And sit, and sing herself away
> To everlasting bliss."

(4) For the tokens of divine approval in our prosperity. The cause has not retrograded; her light has not waned; neither has she stood still; God has been rearing her walls; this man and that have been born in her; this man and that have said, "We will go with you, for God is with you." Zion's stakes have been strengthened, cords lengthened, and friends multiplied. Then, can we do less, with such a delightful retrospect, than thank God? But then there is,

2. The manner of doing it.

How shall we thank him? It should,

(1) Be vocal. Our lips and voices, with a song of praise, should extol and magnify his holy name. "Is any merry? let him sing psalms." It should,

(2) Be spiritual. Our souls, with all their powers, should be filled with the spirit of thanksgiving. It should,

(3) Be general, nay, universal. All his people should be engaged; the minister, the deacons, the elders, the young disciples, each and all should "thank God;" every heart provide a song, and every lip celebrate it in lively accents of praise. It should,

(4) Be harmonious. All in concert; all touch the strings of the harp together, until one long and loud chorus of praise fill the whole church, and ascend as one mingled cloud of holy incense to the throne on high. It should,

(5) Be practical. While lip and heart bless God, the life should adorn his cause, and his love should constrain us to devote all we are and have to his glory. Having seen the apostle's conduct respecting the past, let us,

II. *Consider his Feelings in reference to the Future.*

For he not only thanked God, but "took courage." Now, the experience of the past should inspire us with confidence and hope, as to the future,

1. Because the difficulties and trials we have experienced we shall experience no more.

We may have similar ones; but as Israel only once passed through the waters of the Red Sea, so the individual and collective trials of the past are over forever. That part of the wilderness we shall never retrace. Those enemies, we shall see no more. Let us take courage,

2. Because, amid all changes, our Rock and Help is the same.

No God like the God of Jeshurun; God all-sufficient, and God unchangeable. His love, his pity, his power, never vary, never change. This, this is the God we adore, &c.

3. Christ, in all his merit, and sympathy, and fulness, remains unaltered and unalterable.

We have lived by faith in him—stood fast in him—borne fruit in him—conquered through him—we have had his merit to plead, his sympathy to succor, his fulness to supply us. We have them still, and we shall have them forever.

4. The Spirit's efficient agency is still ours, to guide, support, and comfort us.

Well might we despond, if he withdrew his holy rays—if he removed his seat from our hearts; but he is still within us, the first-fruits, the pledge of future blessedness, the hope of eternal glory; and he shall abide with his church forever. We should take courage,

5. Because the promises of God, in all their variety and richness, shall never fail.

These are the windows of the temple which let in the rays of comfort and joy. How sweet, how varied, how appropriate they are! Well may they be styled, "great and precious promises." Not one

erased from the precious page. All intended for strengthening our hope and joy in God. Let us take courage,

6. In the prospect of meeting to celebrate the great jubilee of the church in the heavenly world.

When God shall gather all his saints together in one vast innumerable company on the plains of celestial light; and when all shall join in the grand and universal anthem, 'Alleluia, Alleluia, for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth! blessing, and glory and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honor, and power, and might, be unto our God, forever and ever. Amen."

SKETCH LVI.

THE CHRISTIAN'S PORTION AND HOPE.

"The Lord is my portion, saith my soul; therefore will I hope in him."—*Lament.* iii. 24.

REFER to the original occasion of the text. Captivity of God's people—Jerusalem in a state of desolation—the extreme sorrow of the prophet—his retrospect, ver. 1 to 21. He refers to God's goodness and sparing mercies in the midst of all his troubles, ver. 22, 23. And then he expresses himself in the language of the text: "The Lord is my portion," &c.

Let us consider the text as the experience of every Christian; and in doing so notice,

I. *The good man's Portion.*

"The Lord is my portion, saith my soul."

The word portion signifies lot or inheritance, in reference to the division of the land of Canaan to the various tribes of Israel. The same expression is adopted by David, Psal. xvi. 5; cxix. 57; cxlii. 5. Now God is the portion or inheritance of his saints; and as such, is vastly superior to all other portions.

1 God is a spiritual portion.

It is true, he confers all real and necessary temporal good. But above and besides all this, he is such a portion as is suited to man's spiritual capacities and exigencies. Nothing of a material nature can satisfy man's vast desires. But God meets all his wishes, and fills up the whole void. The understanding is filled with light—judgment—with truth—affections, with love—conscience, with purity.

2. God is a present portion.

A portion now. He says, 'I am thy God." How different to the experience of the poor backslider, who says, "O that it were with me as in months past!" How different to those who are satisfying themselves, by cultivating mere desires as to the future! The religion that resembles that of the prophet must be in the present tense: "The Lord *is* my portion," &c. "The Spirit of God beareth witness," &c.

3. God is an all-sufficient portion.

So he spake to Abraham, and said, 'I am God Almighty, or God All-sufficient; walk before me, and be thou perfect;" Gen. xvii. 1. Every good is in God, and every good is in God perfectly, and for the happiness of his people. His wisdom, power goodness, are each and all sufficient. He can banish every pain, fill every desire, and remove every want. The worldling's portion is always insufficient.

4. God is an unmixed portion.

In respect of all earthly good, roses grow on thorns—the honey is mixed with gall—light with darkness—the bitter with the sweet. But in God all is pure; no alloy, no darkness, no bitterness.

5. God is a sure portion.

Immutability is engraven on it. Riches are not sure. Health, friends, life, are all associated with uncertainty. But God is beyond the possibility of change; "without variableness, or shadow of turning." Mal. iii. 6; Jas. i. 17.

6. God is an incomprehensible portion.

None by searching can find him out, or know him to perfection; beyond all description; neither can man's loftiest stretch of imagination conceive of him aright. The Christian will never be able to fathom the depths of infinite love, for it passeth understanding; and eternity will be too short to exhaust his munificence, or to utter all his praise.

7. God is an eternal portion.

Eternity is an attribute of Deity, and of Deity only. He is from everlasting and to everlasting, God. He inhabiteth eternity, and will be the portion of his people for ever.

8. God is the common portion of all his people.

All believers, however dissimilar in belief, or however varied in experience, can claim him as their Lord and their God Each and all of his family can say, "Abba, Father." He loves all his saints, and views

them all with infinite complacency and delight.

Then let us consider,

II. *The good man's Hope.*

"Therefore will I hope in him."

Not for exemption from trouble, afflictions, trials, or temptations; these all Christians must feel; these are truly necessary. There is a needs-be for suffering and tribulation. But the good man hopes in God,

1. For strength for every duty.

"As thy day is," Isai. xli. 10; 2 Cor. xii. 9.

2. For comfort in every trial.

He has said, "Unto the upright ariseth light in darkness;" Isai. li. 3; lxvi. 13.

3. For deliverance from every danger.

When thou passest through the waters," &c.; Psal. l. 15; Job v. 19.

4. For victory over every enemy.

"Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors," &c. "Who shall harm us," &c. "We shall triumph, even over the last enemy, death."

5. For an abundant entrance into eternal life.

2 Pet. i. 11.

6. For a blessed resurrection, and the glorification of body and soul forever.

Philip. iii. 21; 1 Cor. xv. 40, &c.; 1 John iii. 2.

APPLICATION

1. How sacredly precious the Christian's portion! How we should prize it, love it, rejoice in it, extol it, and recommend it to others!

2. How blissful and glorious the good man's hope! May we abound in this, as well as every other grace, to our own happiness, and to the honor and glory of God!

SKETCH LVII.

ENLARGEDNESS IN PRAYER.

"Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it."—*Psal* lxxi. 10.

PRAYER is the breathing of the regenerated soul; the sign, and at the same time the appointed medium of life. Our souls hold communion with God in prayer. The supplies of heavenly grace are brought down by prayer. And the more we pray, the more we receive: and it is the will of God that we should ask abundantly, that our joy may be full. Hence the address in the text: "Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it." Observe in the text,

I. The form of prayer—"Open thy mouth." II. The extent of prayer—"Open thy mouth wide." III. The promise given to enlargedness in prayer—"and I will fill it."

I. *The Manner of Prayer—"Open thy Mouth."*

Prayer is often associated with bodily action. For instance it is connected with "lifting up our eyes"—"stretching forth our hands,"—and often, with inquiring, or asking of God with our mouths. Now when we open our mouths to God in prayer, we must do so,

1. From a consciousness of need.

The heart must be hungering and thirsting after God. The soul must be full of solicitude, arising from a sensibility of our wants. Our exigencies must give force and power to our supplications. Then we must open our mouths,

2. With deep humility and self-abasement.

We must consider our own worthlessness and demerit—our aggravated offences against God—our entire reliance on divine forbearance and mercy; and we must abhor ourselves as in sackcloth and ashes See publican.

3. With holy pleadings and importunity of spirit.

It is of the utmost consequence that we plead with God fervently, and with persevering earnestness. Abraham did so; Gen. xviii. 23–33. Jacob did so; Gen. xxxii. 24. Solomon did so; 1 Kings viii. 22 &c. The woman of Canaan did so; Matt xv. 22. Jesus did so; Luke xxii. 24. See, also, James v. 16.

We must open our mouths,

4. In the exercise of believing confidence.

It is faith that gives potency to prayer. Without faith God cannot be pleased, much less accept our prayers. It is whatsoever is asked in faith, that shall be done unto us. Faith honors God's truth by unwavering reliance; his power, and wisdom, and goodness, by confiding in him to grant those things we ask of him; Matt. xxii. 22 Now observe in the text,

II. *The Extent of Prayer—"Open thy Mouth wide."*

1 Ask largely, for an abundance of blessings.

God's bounty is infinite—giving doth not impoverish him—we cannot exceed his ability or disposition to bless us—"Hitherto ye have asked nothing," &c. John xvi. 24.

2. Ask incessantly.

Praying always with all prayer—cannot weary him—prayer is the sweetest melody o the ears of God—"continue in prayer."

3. Ask for all sorts of blessings.

For body and for soul—for this life and that which is to come—for ourselves, families, church, world—"Make all your requests known unto him."

4. Ask for the riches and fulness of all the blessings you seek.

Not for drops, but for the shower—not for the dawn, but noonday splendor—not for a little, but for the richest effusions of his grace; ask for what will totally annihilate your wants; ask for what your souls are capable of enjoying—for all that divine munificence can impart.

III. *The Promise given to Enlargedness in Prayer*—"*I will fill it.*"

How concise, yet comprehensive, is this promise! Observe,

1. He can do it.

Able to do above all we can ask or think. All fulness is in him. Eph. iii. 20.

2. He delights to do it.

It is according to the nature of God, to communicate to his creatures—it is his glory and happiness, to bless those who seek his face.

3. He is pledged to do it.

To his Son in covenant engagement. And to his people, in the declarations of his word. His word is immutability itself—cannot fail in aught he has said.

4. He has never disappointed his supplicating people.

No instance on record. Those who have trusted in him have never been confounded. He never said to any of the seed of Jacob, Seek ye my face in vain.

5. He has often done much more, but never less than he promised.

Solomon prayed for wisdom, and he gave him wisdom, and riches, and honor. The man afflicted with the palsy sought healing, and he received with it forgiveness of sin. The malefactor prayed to be remembered, and he promised him a place in paradise.

APPLICATION

How important, how necessary is prayer! cultivate it—exercise it—watch with it—be grateful for all returns and answers to it—and "open your mouths wide, and he will fill them."

SKETCH LVIII.

By the Rev. M. Tucker, D. D., *of Troy, N. Y.*

MEANS OF A REVIVAL OF RELIGION

"By whom shall Jacob arise? for he is small."—*Amos* vii. 2.

The text, independent of its particular application, may be regarded as a question of great interest to churches under trying circumstances. Jacob represents the people of God. The obvious import of the inquiry is, How shall a church that is small, or in a low state, be built up, revived, raised from its depression?

The object aimed at is not merely an increase of numbers, but a revival of pure and undefiled religion. How then can the number of deeply pious, devoted servants of Christ be increased?

I. *There must be a Preparation of the Soil.*

The Lord saith, "Break up the fallow ground, and sow not among thorns." Every church must have within it some evils which need to be removed. When his special presence is withdrawn they have provoked him by their sins. The message from Zion's King to such is, "Cast ye up, cast ye up, take up the stumbling-block out of the way of my people." The sins of broken vows, of blood-guiltiness, of worldly conformity, of idolatrous pursuit of wealth, of contention, &c., must be repented of, with deep humiliation and prayer before God.

II. *The Church must be urged to cultivate a Spirit of Grace and Supplication.*

This spirit is uniformly poured out upon the members of Christ's church, previous to any extraordinary visits of mercy. This was true under the national reformation by Josiah. Also, it preceded the surprising change effected by the ministry of Ezra. A continued season of prayer preceded the great revival at Jerusalem. Acts i. 14.

III. *The Church must cultivate a Spirit of deep and living Piety.*

Before a revival, the Lord's people generally exhibit more of the life of religion—less worldly-mindedness, and more attachment to God's house—holy ardor enkindled—unconquerable attachment to evangelical truth—filled with the Holy Ghost, and with faith.

IV. *Plain, well-timed Preaching is necessary.*

Is not my word as the fire, and the hammer that breaketh the rocks in pieces? Preaching must be plain—affectionate—direct—and in season. See Peter's sermon at Jerusalem. He thrust the charge of murder into their bosom, which pierced like a barbed arrow from the quiver of the Almighty. The sermons should exhibit the purity, and extent, and righteous sanctions of the law—the deep corruption and alienation of the heart by nature—the work of the Spirit—justification by faith—and the duty of immediate repentance and love.

V. *Protracted Meetings for Public Worship.*

These are not of recent origin. The Jews, from the commencement of their polity, held them; and Nehemiah revived them. It is like bringing a number of sabbaths into immediate succession—the heart is kept fixed upon God—the cross of Christ is exhibited so constantly, that its subduing influence is felt, and the sinner is constrained to cry, What shall I do?

VI. *Another Means is Pastoral Visitation.*

In this very much good may be done—we may aid in deepening impressions—in following up the melting and dissolving process—in encouraging and strengthening the weak and timid, &c.

VII. *Meetings for religious Inquirers.*

These meetings should be short—and special instruction should be given to those who visit them—and directions and help from God must be earnestly and particularly sought.

APPLICATION.

Have we not slept long enough over the interests of Zion?—Are not sinners hastening rapidly to ruin?—Is it not high time to awake out of sleep?—By all that is desirable in the salvation of souls—by all that is binding in the authority of Jehovah—by the love of the Spirit, I beseech you, strive together in prayer and effort for advancing the work of God. Amen.

SKETCH LIX.

By the Rev. WILLIAM NEVINS, *Baltimore.*

THE SOLEMN QUESTION ANSWERED

"What have I done?"—*Jer.* viii. 6.

THE person now addressed is supposed to ask: "What have I done?" and it is designed to answer this question. I shall consider the text as the language of simple inquiry; as the serious interrogation of a person willing to know what he has done.

I. *What if you had done Nothing?*

That is, supposing you wished this to be a plea for your justification, you would still be condemned; for you are required to do something, yea, much. If you have done nothing, you have broken, at least, one-half of the law of God. In so far as its positive requirements are concerned, you are guilty, according to your own confession. You have not loved God, nor glorified him in your body and spirit, which are his. It was for *not* doing, that the inhabitants of Meroz were cursed, and the unprofitable servant cast into outer darkness. To do nothing, when there is so much required to be done, is to do evil, to do wrong; and you need no more to ensure your condemnation. But this plea you cannot offer; for,

II. *You have done Something.*

It is impossible to compute the number of times you have acted and been exercised in the capacity of a moral agent. All these have been acts of obedience, or of disobedience. Each exercise has been right or wrong. They have met the approbation or displeasure of God.

III. *You have done wrong.*

You have acted unreasonably and unfitly, in opposition to those dictates of duty which come to you from within; you have disobeyed conscience; transgressed the law written upon the heart. You have not only sinned against your soul, but against God; broken his holy, just, and good law.

IV. *Suppose you are convicted of one sinful Act, you are guilty, condemned, inexcusable, and undone.*

You cannot answer for that one sin The divine law tolerates sin in no respect

and in no instance. "Cursed is every one that continueth not in *all* things written," &c. See Jas. ii. 10; Gal. iii. 10. The *angels* only sinned once. Adam, by one offence, incurred the penalty of death. If one offence ruined them, is not one offence enough to ruin you? But,

V. *You have done Wrong more than once.*

Yea, so many times, that there is but one Being who can tell how many—and he will tell, when "the books are opened," before assembled worlds. Some appear to think, that if their *right* doings exceed their *wrong* doings, they have nothing to fear. May the subject, or the child, break *this* law, provided only he obey *that?* Into what absurdity and folly, not to say aggravated guilt, will erring mortals plunge! Sin first infatuates, then destroys. But even were this ground available, you could not maintain it, for,

VI. *You have not done more Good than Evil, more Right than Wrong.*

The facts are against you. Your moral acts and exercises have been all of one kind, and all evil, all wrong. You may have acted agreeably to the revealed rule in some cases, but have never acted from right motive—love to God; nor with a right aim, that is, to glorify him: "They that are in the flesh, (i. e., in an unregenerate state,) cannot please God." Then it appears, you have done wrong, and nothing but wrong. All the entries in God's book are against you; and the obedience of the great Surety is not entered to your account, because you have not believed in him. So the case stands. And now consider,

(1) To whom you have done it—to God, your Creator, Preserver, Benefactor.

(2) Consider under what circumstances you have done it—circumstances of light and love; despite of exhortation, command, admonition, entreaty, promise, threatening, judgment, mercy; with heaven opened, to allure; and hell uncovered, to alarm you; with the cross full in view.

(3) Consider the evils involved in such doings—presumption, rebellion, impiety, injustice, madness, baseness, ingratitude, &c Then,

(4) Consider the consequences of having done so—the guilt contracted; the tremendous wrath treasured up. Then consider,

(5) You have done so much, that you must do something more. You must *act*, not wait. You must act quickly the difficulty of the work urges you; uncertainty of life urges you. "Behold, now is the accepted time," &c. You must do, not what you choose, but what God commands. You are not called to make an atonement for sin, or to acquire a title for heaven; but to "believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." Cease to do any thing for yourself, except cordially to trust Christ to do every thing for you. Now do it. He offers himself to you; receive him, and you are saved What is your decision? It is known in heaven—it is recorded there

SKETCH LX.

By the Rev. DAVID SUTHERLAND, *Bath, State of New Hampshire.*

THE SECOND ADVENT

"Behold he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him; and they also which pierced him and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him."—*Rev.* i. 7.

GOD hath appointed a day in the which he will judge the world in righteousness, by that man whom he hath ordained, whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead. As certainly as the Son of God was raised from the dead, shall he come the second time without a sin-offering unto salvation. Brethren, we shall all appear before him; all the generations that have preceded us; all our contemporaries; and all the generations that are unborn, shall be there. "Behold, he cometh with clouds," &c.

Our subject leads us to consider, I. The Judge. II. The Manner of his Coming. III. The Witnesses of his Appearing. And, IV. The Effects of his Decisions.

I. *The Judge.*

John has manifest reference to the divine Saviour: "We shall all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ." Here, then, it may be useful to consider some qualifications of the Son of man for the high office which he sustains.

1. As a judge of glorious dignity, of high, indisputable authority.

Such, indeed, is his dignity, that he is the "brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person; upholding all things by the word of his power." He

"King of kings, and Lord of lords; Heir of all things," &c. He is qualified for his high office,

2. By his perfection of omniscience.

No man, however acute his discernment, can know the thoughts and intents of the heart. With Messiah, is unbounded knowledge. "All things are naked," &c., &c. "He searcheth the hearts," &c. "He needeth not that any should testify of man, or he knoweth what is in him."

3. He is a Being of the most perfect equity.

No quality more important in a judge than pure justice. Our divine Judge is perfectly free from all the partialities incident to humanity: "Judgment and justice are the habitations of his throne." "A sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of his kingdom."

4. As a Judge he will be armed with almighty power.

To express his omnipotence, he is styled in Scripture, "the only Potentate, the King of kings," &c. "He doeth according to his will in the armies of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth." He is almighty. Power and strength belong to his perfections. When he was in the world, the wind and sea obeyed him, and devils fled at his approach. Let us then consider,

II. *The Manner of his Coming.*

"In clouds." Jesus gave this reply when asked, "Art thou the Christ?" He answered: "I am: and ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven;" Mark xiv. 62; xiii. 26; Matt. xxiv. 30; xxvi. 64. The angels, at Christ's ascension, also declared, that he should come again in like manner, as he had ascended, when a cloud received him out of their sight; Acts i. 9–11. The apostle, also, describing the Lord's advent, says: "Then we, which are alive, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air," &c.; 1 Thess. iv. 17. The Scriptures connect the visible appearance of our Lord with a magnificent train of angels, which is to constitute his retinue; Matt. xxv. 31. Notice,

III. *The Witnesses of his Appearing.*

"Every eye shall see him." What a vast assembly! A nation—an empire—a quarter of the globe—whole of the present generation—all the generations past, and all that are yet unborn. In this assembly will be seen his friends and foes—Caiaphas and Annas, the high priests—the Scribes and Pharisees—the fickle multitude, who one day exclaimed, "Hosanna!" and the next, "Crucify him! crucify him!" There will be Pontius Pilate, who condemned, and Judas, who betrayed him—Jews and Gentiles—barbarians and civilized—bond and free—great and small; yea, every eye shall see him. Not one human being shall be excused, from Adam to the last-born of our race. Observe,

IV. *The Consequences of the Coming of the Messiah.*

"All nations shall wail because of him." All nations have sinned against him; multitudes of all nations have hated and rejected him. To them the appearance of the Judge will be terrible indeed! He will then arraign them, try them, pronounce them guilty, and cause them to be thrust out, where there will be "weeping, wailing and gnashing of teeth."

APPLICATION.

1. It is a consolatory truth, that the Judge of all is the Saviour of men. He once died for us; he now invites and entreats us to come to him for pardon and life "Kiss the Son, lest he be angry," &c.; Psal. ii. 12. "Agree with thine adversary," &c.; Matt. v. 25.

2. We see the evil nature and dreadful consequences of sin. It is this that makes life wretched, death fearful, and judgment tremendous. Deliverance from it, therefore, is present happiness, and will lay a foundation for a blessed hope of meeting the descending Judge with joy, and not with grief.

3. To the incorrigibly wicked, that day of the Lord will be fearful indeed! See Rev. vi. 14–17; 2 Thess. i. 8.

SKELETON LXXI.

THE SPIRIT OF ADOPTION

"For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father"—*Rom.* viii. 15.

THIS subject is stated by the apostle,

I. *Negatively.*

Believers "have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear." Observe

1. The Jews were under a spirit of bondage and fear.

The apostle speaks of their yoke as being one which neither they nor their fathers could bear. Their ceremonies and rites were so numerous, that the mind must always have been in a state of thraldom and anxious alarm. Such are described as being slaves, the sons of the bondwoman, Gal. iv. 30. Not only were the Jews in this state, but,

2. The Gentiles had a spirit of bondage and fear.

They felt the imperfection and misery of their state, and devised numerous plans for their improvement and happiness. But all was ineffectual. The strong man kept possession; sin reigned and tyrannized; and they could find no sure and certain expedient to remove their alarms, or allay their fears.

3. All believers were once subject to a spirit of bondage and fear.

"Ye were the slaves of sin;" Rom. vi. 17. "At that time ye were without Christ, being aliens," &c.; Eph. ii. 12. As such, the mind was darkened with guilt, and the conscience burdened with apprehensions of the wrath to come. But the subject is stated,

II. *Positively.*

Believers "have received the spirit of adoption," &c.

1. Believers are adopted into the divine family.

No longer afar off, aliens, &c.; but brought nigh, and received into the family of God. This change is the result of divine grace. It is always in connection with faith, John i. 12; and it is effected by the holy Spirit of God. As the Spirit is the agent, so,

2. The Holy Spirit is the evidence of our adoption.

It dwells in all the sons of God. "Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts," &c.; Gal. iv. 6. So the verse following the text: "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirits," &c.

3. This Spirit is a Spirit of freedom and confidence.

"It makes free from the law of sin and death;" ver. 2. It breaks our bonds, dissolves our fetters, and brings us into the liberty of the children of God. Dread is removed, and holy affection and confidence in God inspired.

4. This Spirit enables believers to address God as their Father.

By which we cry, *Abba!* that is, Father! God is dreaded by the sinner; but loved by his children. They can draw nigh to him with holy assurance, and say to him, Father! And as such they are interested,

(1) In his fatherly care and protection: "I will spare him," &c.; Mal. iii. 17.

(2) Fatherly supplies: "If ye, being evil," &c.; Matt. vii. 11.

(3) Fatherly instructions and corrections; Heb. xii. 6–11.

(4) Fatherly affections and delights John xvi. 27.

(5) Fatherly promises and interests "If children, then heirs; heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ;" ver. 17

IMPROVEMENT.

1. How miserable and degraded the servants of sin! Held in bondage—full of fear—exposed to death. 2. How happy God's people! Sons, not slaves; the Spirit of adoption filling them with joy, and righteousness, and peace, and a blessed hope of a glorious immortality.

SKELETON LXXII

THE PRESENT NOT THE CHRISTIAN'S REST.

"Arise ye, and depart; for this is not your rest."—*Micah* ii. 10.

THERE is a strong tendency in the human mind, to live by sense, and not by faith. Sense invariably prefers the present to the future. Hence, we perceive why so many are absorbed in the fleeting scenes of this life; while heaven and eternity have no place in all their thoughts. They speak and act, they labor and toil, as if this world were their highest destination. The people of God are differently minded; they confess that they are but strangers and pilgrims, as their fathers were; they feel the force, and obey the spirit, of the address contained in the text, &c. Observe in this passage,

I. *An important Truth stated.*

"This is not your rest." The present world is not, cannot be, the rest of the good man; it is not suited to his dispositions

it cannot answer his expectations; it cannot fulfil his hopes.

1. It is not suited to his spiritual nature.

Might do for mere animal existences. It might answer for creatures merely rational. World full of beauty and excellency. But it does not meet the mighty grasp of the human mind. Solomon exhausted both its riches and its pleasures, and inscribed upon all of them, "Vanity of vanities."

2. The inspired figurative representations of it show it is not our rest.

The world is a *sea;* and the sea is always in motion. The world is a *wilderness;* and the traveller hastens through it. It is a *field*, the scene of toil and labor; the husbandman seeks rest in his house. The Christian is a *mariner;* but his rest is beyond the ocean of this life. He is a *traveller;* and his destination is beyond this dreary, waste, howling wilderness. He is a *laborer;* and when his day is ended, God shall give him rest from all his toil.

3. The experience of good men in all ages proves that this is not our rest.

Abraham went out, &c.; Moses forsook it, &c.; David longed to fly away and be at rest; Job declared that he loathed it, and would not live alway; Paul desired to depart, and be with Christ, which is far better.

4. The afflictions of life prove it is not our rest.

This world is one scene of crosses and disappointments; poverty, reproach, persecution, temptation; afflictions, bodily, mental, domestic, &c. Hence, the good man groans in this tabernacle, being burdened. He waits for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of his body. Rom. viii. 23.

5. Our bereavements preach the same truth.

We see Rachel weeping for her children; David lamenting over Jonathan; the sisters mourning over Lazarus. Our parents, our partners, our children, our friends, where are they? They are gone before us; we are following them; and fearing that we should build below the skies, they beckon us onward, and remind us, that this is not our rest.

6. The most joyous earthly scenes further establish it.

Those who have all that heart can wish, or soul enjoy; those who are great, and healthful, and rich, are not happy. The spirit cannot be bound or be content with earthly good; it will soar upwards; it will press forward; and nothing less than an eternity and an infinity of delights can meet its demands, and satiate its desires.

Notice in the text,

II. *A consequent Duty urged.*

"Arise ye, and depart," &c. Now, this duty includes,

1. An abandonment of the world as the object of our affections and trust.

"Love not the world," &c.; 1 John ii. 15. "Set your affections," &c; Col. ii. 1–3.

2. A firm and blessed persuasion, that there is another and a better world.

Yes: God has revealed one, a heavenly one. It is exhibited in his word—promised in his gospel—and offered to all who love and serve him.

3. A free and decided choice of this as suited to our capacities and desires.

A spiritual, holy, and eternal rest.

4. A vigorous employment of the appointed means for its possession.

To "arise" from stupor and carelessness from inattention and unbelief; and to seek and pursue, by believing prayer and holy obedience, the way which is marked out as leading to the heavenly Jerusalem Having entered the old paths, there is going onwards from stage to stage, until they appear perfect before the God of gods in Zion.

APPLICATION.

1. Warn the worldling. Be not deceived; yield not to infatuation. This is not a rest for immortal spirits. "What shall it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" 2. Arouse the supine. Many subscribe to the truth of the text, but still remain careless, at ease, &c. Surely, it is now high time to awake, to be anxious, to be in earnest. 3. Encourage the Christian traveller. Travel onwards. There is a rest; and it is yours by promise, by anticipation; and you shall soon possess it. Lift up your heads; the time of your redemption draweth nigh.

"You are marching through Immanuel's land,
To fairer worlds on high!"

SKELETON LXXIII.

THE LORD'S SUPPER

"Ye do show the Lord's death till he come."—1 *Cor* xi. 26.

THE subject connected with the text is that of believers' commemorating the death of Jesus by regarding the ordinance of his Supper. The text especially refers to the symbolical import of this ordinance, which is "showing forth the Lord's death till he come."

Let us consider,

I. *In what Way we exhibit Christ's Death in this Ordinance.*

1. The elements used exhibit the manner of his death.

Bread, the symbol of his body; wine, the symbol of his blood. Bread broken, the symbol of the torn and afflicted body of Jesus, when he was smitten, scourged, crowned with thorns, and his hands and feet pierced and mangled with the nails, &c. Wine poured out, exhibiting the blood, the life of Christ, shed as a ransom for sin, especially when his side was pierced, and there came forth a fountain of blood and water.

2. This ordinance exhibits the design of Christ's death.

Wherefore did he suffer? What evil had he done? Was he not holy and without fault—a spotless lamb? He suffered for sin, and the welfare of sinners. He gave his body to be the food of the world; his blood, to remove the misery of the world. See John x. 11–15. "He said, This is my body, broken for you;" ver. 24. In this ordinance,

3. We perceive the manner by which we become interested in Christ's death.

That is, by personal participation; not by a knowledge of it, or reflection, or desires; but by eating his flesh and drinking his blood. We must truly and really receive Christ into our hearts by faith. John vi. 33.

4. We perceive in this ordinance the influence Christ's death will have upon us.

It will lead to an affectionate remembrance of Christ, of his person, of his love, of his sorrows. And how necessary it is, that we should thus remember him! How necessary to keep his cross before our eyes! How calculated it is to lead to increased hatred of sin, self-abasement, and growing attachment to Christ! Notice,

II. *Christ's Death must be exhibited in this Ordinance till he come.*

Until that glorious day,

1. His church will stand in need of ordinances, and especially of this.

We walk now by faith; and here faith is quickened and strengthened, love inflamed, hope brightened. This ordinance stands, as it were, mid-way between his first and second advent; on this elevation we look back on what he has done for us; and forwards, to the completion of all his mediatorial undertakings, when he will appear the second time, without a sin-offering, to salvation.

2. When Christ comes, this, with other ordinances, will be superseded.

Then, we shall not have to lament his absence. Then, faith will be exchanged for sight, and hope lost in happy fruition Then, the dispensation of grace and truth shall be succeeded by an eternity of glory and enjoyment in his immediate presence, where there is fulness of joy, and pleasures for evermore. Let us,

III. *Urge this Duty of exhibiting Christ's Death upon all Believers.*

1. Our faith and obedience should oblige us to it.

If our faith has laid hold of Jesus, shall we not prize him? Will he not be precious to us? Shall we not wish to see him always, and in every ordinance? Will it not be disloyalty to slight his dying command? Can we be consistent, and slight this affecting and interesting ordinance? We are bound to observe it,

2. From our love and gratitude to Him.

Here, indeed, we perceive that Christ's love to us exceeded his love to his own life, for he laid down his life for us. Here we may learn the debt of gratitude we owe. If we love him, we shall keep especially this commandment. If we are grateful, it will be seen in our strict regard of this holy ordinance.

3. Our own happiness and well-being demanded it.

Ordinances are for our interest, for our improvement, and growth in grace and holiness. They are the wells from whence we draw the water of life; the banquet where we eat and drink, and are refreshed with the provisions of God's house. Neglect must produce leanness and barrenness of soul.

4. We owe it to the church and to the world to exhibit Christ's death.

It is the church's family rite; as her

sons we must be present. The cross is the world's only hope, and it must be elevated. We must not conceal Christ's death, but display it, and commemorate it. For it is by Christ being lifted up, that he will draw all men unto him.

SKELETON LXXIV

THE MIRACLE OF NAIN.

"Now when he came nigh to the gate of the city, behold, there was a dead man carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow," &c. —*Luke* vii. 12–16.

How splendid the career of Jesus! How sublime his works! How unparalleled his miracles! He spake and acted as a God! Every footstep displayed his divinity; almighty power and unbounded goodness distinguished all his acts. How applicable these observations to the narrative embodied in the text!

Observe,

I. *What the Redeemer beheld.*

It was a funeral procession: always a solemn and an affecting scene; often, however, excites no surprise, and produces no emotion. But this was,

1. A young man.

The old must die. We wonder not to see the sun go down in the evening—the grass fade in autumn—and vegetable nature expire in winter. But his sun had gone down at noon-day; leaf withered in spring, &c.

2. He was an only son.

Loss of children distressing; but especially so, when there are none left, to whom our affections can be transferred. Mourning for an only son is represented in Scripture as the essence of grief; Jer. vi. 26.

3. He was the only son of a widow.

One who had lost her companion and bosom friend; left to travel through the dreary scenes of life alone. Her son therefore would be her earthly stay and comfort; her name and family would be handed down in him; he would be her protector, solace in affliction, and would gently close her eyes in death, and receive her last prayers and blessings. But behold! the aged afflicted widow lives; and the son is cut down as a flower in all his loveliness and bloom! It is observed, too, that the mother, with a large company, were following his corpse to its long home. Probably he had been well known and highly respected. Notice,

II. *What Christ felt.*

"He had compassion on her." His eye affected his heart: besides, the whole grief of her fainting heart was before him; he knew the whole of the matter. This was

1. Agreeable to his nature.

He is a compassionate High Priest. His heart was full of tenderness; his bowels moved with pity and love.

2. Agreeable to all his works.

Compassion brought him from heaven. His addresses, his prayers, his miracles, were all full of compassion. His life, his sufferings, his death, displayed an overflowing of compassion. When he arose from the dead, and when he ascended, he manifested the greatest compassion. And now exalted at God's right hand, as the Intercessor of man, he is still distinguished for his compassion; Heb. iv. 15; v. 1, 2. Notice,

III. *What Christ said.*

"He said unto her, Weep not.' But was it not a very harsh and unreasonable demand? Might she not have reminded him, that to weep was,

1. In accordance with the feelings of our nature?

Has not God made our hearts soft? Did he design that we should be hard and insensible?

2. Have not the best of men wept?

Jacob for Joseph; David for Absalom. Did not Jesus weep at the grave of Lazarus? Besides,

3. This was an extremely afflictive case.

A friend; that friend a close relative a son; an only son: and that mother a widow; and a widow, too, in Israel; whose soul's desire would be, to perpetuate her name and tribe. Still he insists that she must weep not. We shall soon perceive the reason: he was about to remove the cause of sorrow, and therefore he said unto her, "Weep not." Observe,

IV. *What the Redeemer did.*

1. He touched the bier.

Arrested it in its course; bearers felt it impossible to advance; finger of God was upon it. Hence, they stood still, astonished, amazed!

2. He commanded the corpse to arise.

"Young man, I say unto thee, Arise." Although dead, he heard the voice of the

Son of God and lived. His spirit heard it in Hades—the invisible state, and came back. The heart felt the omnific power of it, and began to heave, and warm, and dilate; the blood circulated; the cheeks flushed; the limbs softened; the eyes opened; he sat up; and last of all, he began to speak.

3 He delivered him to his mother.

Christ might have insisted on the consecration of himself to his service, as a disciple, evangelist, or apostle. But his mother had need of him, and therefore he returns him back again to her arms and to her heart. Compassion commenced, and compassion gave the last finishing stroke to this splendid and divine scene.

4. The people glorified God.

The glory of God was the grand object and end of Christ's undertakings.

APPLICATION.

See in this young man, 1. A striking picture of the natural state of man. Dead in trespasses and sins; passing onwards to the dark gloomy regions of the second and eternal death. 2. Learn the only means of restoration. The powerful yet gracious word of the compassionate Jesus. "No other name," &c. He only is the resurrection and the life. 3. God is greatly glorified in the salvation of sinners. Yes: when souls are saved, all the purposes, and designs, and arrangements of redeeming love are answered; then Christ sees the travail of his soul, and receives a reward for his toils; and God rejoices over them; Isai. lxii. 5.

SKELETON LXXV.

THE SAINTS' CORONATION.

"And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away."—1 *Pet.* v. 4.

THERE are three things in the text: I. An interesting Description of Christ.—"The chief Shepherd." II. A Reference to his Second Advent.—"When the chief Shepherd shall appear." And, III. The Reward He will then confer upon his People.—"A crown of glory that fadeth not away." There is,

I. *An interesting Description of Christ.*

"The chief Shepherd." Christ is frequently described as a Shepherd. David refers to him as such, Psal. xxiii. 1; lxxx 1; so Isaiah, xl. 11; so Ezekiel, xxxiv. 11; Zech. xiii. 7. Christ described himself as such, John x. 11, &c. As a Shepherd,

1. He has his flock.

Hence, he speaks of his sheep, &c., John x. 27. His flock consists of all those who truly believe in him, who love him, and who follow him. They are a *purchased* flock, bought with his precious blood; they are a *separated* flock, distinct from the world; they are a *holy* flock, "a peculiar people, zealous of good works."

2. He has his fold.

And that is his church; into which there is one entrance, by faith in himself, who is the only door. Around it is the wall of the divine presence; and within it the bounty of God to satisfy all his people. As a Shepherd,

3. He has his pastures.

"Green pastures" by the side of "still waters." These are his word and ordinances, which never fade, but are always verdant, and fresh, and fruitful. But Christ is.

4. The chief Shepherd.

He has many who are under-shepherds; and whom he hath called, and qualified, and sent to feed his flock: but Christ is the chief Shepherd; his word only is imperative; he is the true and only Head of the church; he guides, overrules, preserves, and blesses his people. To him all others are amenable; and to him all their accounts must be given up. Observe,

II. *A Reference to his Second Advent.*

"When the chief Shepherd shall appear." He has once appeared, and having finished his work, has entered into the holiest of all; but he will come again; he shall visit our world once more, and then every eye shall see him.

1. His second advent is certain.

The prophecies are full of it; Isai. lxvi. 15–24; Jer. xxiii. 5; Psal. l. 1–6; Ezek. xliii. 2; Zech. xiv. 9. The gospels and epistles are full of it; see especially, Matt. xxv. 31; Acts i. 11; 2 Thess. ii. 7; 2 Pet. iii. 10; Rev. i. 1, &c.

2. His second advent will be glorious.

Not like his appearance in Bethlehem, not to suffer and die; not to be a sacrifice for sin; but as universal King—as the Ruler of the nations—as Judge of quick and dead—he will come in all the glory of

his Father, of his own glory, and of the holy angels; Dan. vii. 9.

3. His second advent will be momentous.

"A day of blackness, and desolation, and wo to the ungodly;" 2 Thess. i. 8; Psal. xi. 6. It will also be of the greatest moment to saints—the day of their complete redemption, of their consummated felicity. Hence notice,

III. *The Reward he will then confer upon his People.*

"A crown of glory," &c. The reward will be,

1. A crown.

The highest summit of human ambition; sign of greatness and dignity, of riches and abundance. Then shall believers all be kings to God and the Lamb. They shall have thrones, sceptres, and kingdoms, and shall reign with Christ, the King of kings, forever and ever.

2. A crown of glory.

Not of thorns, like that worn by the insulted Redeemer; not of flowers, like those given to the successful racers and wrestlers in the Olympic games; not of gold, which is so heavy as to fatigue, and is still more heavy and unbearable by a thousand cares; but of "glory;"—reflecting the divine glory—suited to the dignified spirit of the saint—worthy of Christ's bestowal; like that which the first-born of the divine family wears; "Joint-heirs with Christ."

3. That fadeth not away.

Health, beauty, friends, life, &c., all fail and fade. Earth is passing away; all nature shall be changed and renovated: but this crown shall shine with increasing splendor; like its Author, it shall possess unchanging lustre, and be the symbol of that perpetuated fulness of bliss, which the righteous shall enjoy forever.

APPLICATION.

Who shall receive this crown? All faithful ministers described in this chapter, ver. 1–3; all the children of God: "If children, then heirs," &c. "If we suffer with him," &c. These possess a title to it; God is making them increasingly meet for it. They believe, and hope, and pray, and are diligent, that they may possess it. "And when the chief Shepherd," &c., &c.

SKELETON LXXVI.

THE GOSPEL INVITATION

"Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price."—*Isai.* lv. 1

In the text there are three things: I. The Commodities announced. II. The Persons addressed. And, III. The Invitation given. Notice,

I. *The Commodities announced.*

These are waters, milk, and wine.

1. Waters.

The blessings of the gospel are often likened to waters. The figure is adopted by the prophets; Isai. xxxv.; lxiii. 2; lxiv. 3; Ezek. xlvii. 3. The Saviour adopted the same metaphor; John iv. 10, vii. 37. Now, as water is essential to life, and is the medium of purification, so the blessings of the gospel bring life to the dead, and purity to the defiled.

2. Milk—

Is intended to refer to the nutritive qualities of the gospel. By it the soul is nourished, and we are strengthened in the inward man. Hence, the apostle exhorts that we desire the sincere milk of the word, that we may grow thereby; 1 Pet. ii. 2.

3. Wine.

Which represents the exhilarating influences of the gospel on the heart, by which we are filled with joy and consolation, through believing. Here, then, is life, and food, and felicity; in short, in the gospel there is all that is necessary to our present safety, comfort, and happiness, and the eternal glorification of body and soul in the world to come. Notice,

II. *The Persons addressed.*

"Every one that thirsteth."

1. That is, to all who feel their need of Christ and his salvation.

This desire, like the sensation of thirst, is,

(1) Accompanied with pain. A sense of sin causes great mental distress; enjoyment ceases; food imbittered; life wretched; fear possesses the mind as an armed man.

(2) It is accompanied with restlessness and anxiety. "Who will show me any good?" "What shall I do to be saved?" "Lord, carest thou not that we perish?" "O, that I knew where I might find him" &c.

(3) It is accompanied with vehement desire. Of such it will be said: Behold, they pray! Yes: God's mercy will be implored; the soul will earnestly entreat of the Lord, and offer strong cries for his divine assistance. "As the heart panteth after the water-brooks," &c. Now the gospel is offered,

2. To every one that thirsteth.

Without regard to previous character; however unworthy, or however debased; of every rank and grade in society; of every age, and clime, and color, and people, and tongue. "Whosoever shall hunger and thirst after righteousness shall be filled." "And whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved."

Notice,

III. *The Invitation given.*

1. They are to come to the waters.

Not to remain any longer at a distance; but to draw near to God by faith in his holy word. These waters they will find in the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make wise unto salvation. These waters they will find in a preached gospel; this is emphatically the word of salvation. These waters flow in divine ordinances, and therefore we are come to the word—to the declared gospel—and to Christ's holy ordinances. And in coming to the waters, we must come simply and humbly, just as we are, we must come despairing of help elsewhere; we must come trusting alone in Christ's precious name, as there is salvation in none other; and we must come immediately, for, "Behold, now is the accepted time, and the day of salvation."

2. We must buy.

Not that we can give God any equivalent; but he has terms on which he bestows these blessings. These are, a surrendering ourselves up to his holy service; a yielding ourselves to the Lord. He says: "My son, give me thine heart." "If any will be my disciple, let him follow me." Hence, although there are terms, there is no merit supposed or implied; it is "without money and without price."

3. We must personally participate.

"Buy and eat." We must truly and really possess and enjoy in our souls the blessings offered. "The kingdom of God is within you." The water must be taken, and thirst assuaged; milk and wine received, and thus nourishment and strength be realized.

APPLICATION.

Now in conclusion, let the invitation have a cordial and welcome reception: Ho! every one that thirsteth, come! You need this provision, and must perish without it. It has been provided at an immense cost, even Christ's precious blood. You are truly welcome; for God is indeed solicitous for your happiness. The terms must meet your circumstances, as it is without money and without price. There is enough for every applicant, and none shall be turned empty away. Now, now, is the opportunity! If neglected, if despised, it will pass away forever! Ho! then, every one that thirsteth, come to the waters, &c., &c.

"'Whoever will,' (O gracious word!)
May of this stream partake;
Come, thirsty souls, and bless the Lord
And drink, for Jesus' sake."

SKELETON LXXVII.

CHILDREN AND HEIRS OF GOD

"And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ."—*Rom.* viii. 17.

True religion is founded in an entire change of character; and those who truly belong to the Christian family, have been brought from a state of alienation and slavery, to be the children of God, and of the household of faith. True religion is associated with real dignity, for every disciple of Jesus is a king's son, an heir of God, and a joint-heir with Christ. These two important principles are included in the text—wherein, I. We have an Important Supposition.—"If children." And, II. A Glorious Conclusion.—"Then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ."

I. *We have an Important Supposition.*

"If children." The apostle is keeping in view his observations in verses 14, 15 and 16, respecting those who are led by the Spirit being the sons of God, having the Spirit of adoption, and also having the witness of the Spirit, that they are the children of God. Now the children of God,

1 Have been regenerated by his Spirit and word.

Born of the Spirit; born again of the incorruptible seed of the word; John

iii. 3–8, 1 Pet. i. 23. The children of God,

2. Have been renewed in the divine likeness.

They resemble God—bear his holy image—image of sin effaced—old things all passed away—created anew, to good works. The children of God,

3. Are members of his family.

Not slaves; but sons. Hence, they cry: "Abba, Father!" Adopted into the divine household.

4. They are called by his name.

"I will be a Father unto you; and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord." They are the Lord's seed, portion, friends, beloved, &c. Now, those who are children,

5. Are conscious of it.

"We know that we have passed from death unto life," &c. "I know in whom I have believed," &c. "We know that we are of God," &c. 1 John i. 3; iii. 14, 19, &c. Observe, in the text,

II. *A Glorious Conclusion.*

"If children, then heirs," &c. God's children,

1. Are heirs.

(1) As children interested in the paternal estate.

(2) At present in their minority; expectants of the blessed inheritance.

(3) Possessing sufficient supplies, until the time of their majority arrives. God supplies all their present need, out of the riches of his fulness in glory, &c.

2. Heirs of God.

What an inheritance! The infinitely rich and blessed God! God says: "I am your God." "I am your exceeding great reward." Sometimes said to be "heirs of the promises;" "heirs of the kingdom;" "heirs of all things;" Heb. vi. 12; Rev. xxi. 7. But here, all are included: "Heirs of God"—of his light—of his life—of his love—of his happiness—of his kingdom—of his riches—of his glory—of all that he is of a communicable nature. What a sublime, infinite, immutable, satisfying, and eternal inheritance—"Heirs of God!"

3. Joint-heirs with Christ.

(1) Heirs in and by Christ's right and title. By receiving Christ, we become interested in all the new covenant-blessings procured by him.

(2) Heirs of the same blessings with Christ. Christ had promised to him rest, honor, joy, and dominion. These all saints participate of with Christ. Sit on his throne—partake of his glory—share in his triumphs—and drink of his joys; John xvii 5; Rev. iii. 21.

APPLICATION

1. Let believers be careful to have a clear title to, and grow in meetness for, this inheritance. 2. Let all God's children rejoice in their high and heavenly calling. Who so rich, so dignified, as the children of God? Besides, their inheritance is certain, unbounded, and everlasting. Their riches endure forever and ever. 3. Invite poor wretched sinners to come, and by faith lay claim to God's gracious promises For this inheritance is not lessened by the number of co-heirs. Each child of God shall have God for his portion, and the lot of his inheritance forever.

SKELETON LXXVIII.

SUFFERING AND GLORIFICATION

"If so be, that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together."—*Rom.* viii. 17

THE end of God's redeeming arrangements is, that we may be conformed to the image of his Son. This is man's highest dignity and greatest felicity. This likeness is commenced in justification, wherein we are conformed to Christ's likeness; it is particularly formed in regeneration, by which we become partakers of the divine nature; it is progressively carried on in sanctification, as we are thus changed into Christ's image, from glory to glory, by the Spirit of the Lord; it is completed in glorification, where we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. Now, if the believer is to be conformed to Christ's dignifying image, need we wonder that he should also be called to partake in the fellowship of his sufferings? Both of these are exhibited in the text. For observe, I The Believer must suffer with Christ And then, II. They shall be glorified together.

I. *The Believer must suffer with Christ*

"If so be, that we suffer with him." Suffering is the lot of our common humanity. The Christian, however, has sorrows of a peculiar character—sufferings for Christ and conscience' sake.

1. The believer is often called upon to suffer,

(1) Poverty.

(2) Temptation.

(3) Persecution and reproach.

(4) Sometimes the loss of all things, and life itself. But,

2. The believer suffers with Christ.

That is,

(1) He suffers them for Christ's sake. From faith in, and love to Christ.

(2) He suffers them in Christ's spirit. That is, meekly, patiently, resignedly, prayerfully.

(3) He suffers them to Christ's glory. This is his object, and great aim, that the Saviour may be honored.

Observe, that those who suffer with Christ,

II. *Shall be glorified together.*

1. They shall be glorified.

That is, they shall be exalted, dignified, enriched, amply rewarded, and eternally blessed. But,

2. They shall be glorified with Christ.

Have a share in his glory; glorified as he is glorified.

(1) With Christ they shall have the perfect approval of the Father. He shall say: "Well done," &c.; Matt. xxv. 21.

(2) With Christ they shall possess glorious resurrection-bodies. Bodies spiritual, luminous, and incorruptible. "Fashioned like unto his glorious body;" Philip. iii. 21.

(3) With Christ they shall be exalted to God's right hand, Matt. xxv. 34.

(4) With Christ they shall be enthroned, and have dominion, and power, and authority; Rev. iii. 21.

(5) With Christ they shall drink of the fulness of divine pleasures; Matt. xxvi. 29.

(6) With Christ they shall shine forth in their Father's kingdom forever and ever. See John xvii. 21, 22; xxi. 7; 1 Cor. vi. 2; Rev i. 56.

APPLICATION.

1. Let the Christian suffer joyfully with Christ to the end. 2. Let the Christian live in the anticipation of future bliss. 3. Let not the cross be thrown aside. Observe, it is said: "If so be, that we suffer with him." And we may reasonably affirm, that if we do not suffer with him, we shall not be glorified together.

SKELETON LXXIX

THE DAY OF SMALL THINGS.

"Who hath despised the day of small things?" *Zech.* iv. 10.

Let us,

I. *Urge the Interrogation,*

"Who hath despised the day of small things?"

1. The naturalist does not.

He throws in his grain, and watches its progress, and waits for its ripening. He plants his shrubs, and waits for their maturity.

2. The philosopher does not.

He knows that minor must precede larger and more important events. The elements of science must first be known, before a knowledge of the leading principles can be acquired.

3. The mother does not.

The more helpless and weak the babe, the more care and solicitude she displays. She sees in the little infant the man in embryo, and expects one day to see the manhood in all its maturity.

4. The teacher does not.

He does not despise and refuse the scholar because he is ignorant of the letters of his native alphabet; but there he knows he must commence, and lays that as the foundation of the scholar's future learning and greatness.

5. Angels do not.

Over the repentance of one poor sinner, the very first commencement of a religious course, they rejoice with exceeding great joy.

6. Satan does not.

He knows, if he can cause indifference to little things, that souls will fall, by little and little. First temptation.

7. God does not.

The sight affects his heart; a groan pierces heaven; a look ensures his favor He breaks not the bruised reed, &c. Then,

8. Christians ought not.

In respect to inquiring souls, however illiterate, poor, &c. In respect of their brethren, however imperfect or few their talents, &c. In respect of benevolent institutions; or in respect of the cause of the Redeemer, as established in any particular part of our world. Christianity itself was once as a grain of mustard-seed

a small cloud, not bigger than a human hand; all its friends met in a small room, &c.

II. *What does the Day of Small Things demand from us?*

1. Especial care, tenderness, and attention.

That it may not be injured; that the smoking flax may not expire, &c.

2. Much watchfulness and prayer.

Dangers warded off—blessings procured—that it may grow stronger and stronger. Protection of heaven and smile of God obtained

3. Strong faith and hope in God.

That he will not forsake it; but preserve, and shield, and increase it.

4. The active employment of all the appointed means.

He that improves what he hath, however small, shall have more abundantly, &c.

APPLICATION.

1. Let us not be satisfied with small things in religious experience. Seek after much knowledge, strong faith, ardent love; endeavor to bear much fruit. 2. Let us aim at enlarged and extensive usefulness in the church and the world. And while we do not despise the day of small things, let us long and labor for the copious outpouring of the Spirit, and be found looking for the time, when "a nation shall be born in a day."

SKELETON LXXX.

THE MORNING STAR

"The bright and morning star."—*Rev.* xxii 16

LANGUAGE utterly fails to set forth the dignity beauty and preciousness of Christ. The inspired writers, therefore, selected the most striking figures and emblems, that this deficiency in language might, in some respects, be remedied. Hence, objects associated with both the earth and heavens, are employed to exhibit him to our view. He is the "Rose of Sharon," the "Lily of the Valley," and the "Plant of Renown." He is a rock—a refuge—and a strong tower. He is compared to the light of heaven—the orb of the day—and in our text, he says: "I am the bright and morning star."

Let us,

I. *Consider Christ as a Star.*

Now it must be observed, that the metaphor relates to Christ in his subordinate or mediatorial character. As such, Christ may be likened to a star;

1. Because the rays or beams of the eternal Sun are thrown upon him.

As the star or planet has thrown upon it the light of the sun, so all the glorious rays of Deity were shed down upon the person of the Saviour. Hence, he who had seen the Son, had also seen the Father. Hence, Christ declared or revealed God to men: "He was the brightness of his Father's glory, and express image of his person." "God manifest in the flesh;" John i. 8; Heb. i. 3. All the rays of divine knowledge—of divine truth and purity—of divine goodness and mercy, were concentrated in the person of Christ. He may be likened to a star,

2. Because he reflects and sheds abroad the light which he received from the Father.

The light thrown upon the star is not absorbed or lost; but it is reflected and diffused through the sphere or system of which that star may be the sun or centre Now, Jesus, in the capacity of mediator, received all the rays of the blessed and adorable Godhead, that he might spread them abroad. Hence, his rays were diffused wherever he went. He said, "I am the light of the world;" and he manifested, by his holy beams, the misery and helplessness of our world—the love and compassion of God in redeeming it—and the way by which all the blessings of redemption, both in time and in eternity, might be enjoyed. Yes: he brought life and immortality to light by his gospel; he opened a clear pathway to eternal glory.

But let us consider Christ,

II. *As the bright and morning Star.*

The morning star is that planet which ushers in the dawn of the morning; with its appearance night terminates and day begins. Now, Jesus will appear as the bright and morning star,

1. As he ushered in the day of our world's creation.

The night of chaotic darkness and confusion fled at his approach. He stepped forth, and bade light appear, and light was. He created all things by the word of his power; and the world we inhabit owes its

existence to his wisdom, power, and love; ohn i. 3; Heb. i. 2; Col. i. 16.

2. As he ushered in the day of our world's hope of deliverance from sin.

Sin brought darkness, and desolation, and wo, and death into our world. Had not Deity interposed, there would have been one dreary and endless night of misery and despair. But when all seemed lost, a ray of light was seen, and it proved to be a ray from the "bright and morning star;" and then it was announced, man should not be a child of darkness and eternal night, but that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head; Gen. iii. 15. As the morning star,

3. He ushered in the day of our world's actual redemption.

Yes: in the fulness of the times, this heavenly star appeared—illumined the land of Judea—brought light and life into our world—and threw open the doors of liberty, and happiness, and salvation to the captive, miserable, perishing sons of men.

Hence, Zacharias sang: "Through the tender mercy of our God, whereby the day-spring from on high hath visited us," &c.; Luke i. 78.

4. He introduces spiritual day into the believer's heart.

Mind naturally dark; children of night; but when Christ shines on the mind, then they become the children of the day and of light; the glory of the Lord having arisen upon them; 2 Pet. i. 19.

> "He is my soul's bright morning star;
> And he, my rising sun."

5. He will usher in the day of our earth's millennial glory.

That glorious day spoken of by the prophets, predicted by Jesus, and so often referred to by the apostles, will commence, when He shall appear the second time without a sin-offering, in all his glory; as king of Zion—as the avenger of the ungodly—as the bridegroom of his church—as the resurrection of the saints—and as the earth's Prince and Lord, who shall live and reign in the midst of his people a thousand years; 2 Thess. i. 7–10; 2 Pet. iii. 8–14; Rev. xix., xx.

6. He will usher in the great and blessed day of eternity.

When all other sources of light will be unnecessary—when all darkness with respect to his saints will be forever annihilated—"The Lamb will be the light thereof," forever and ever; Rev. xxi. 23–26

APPLICATION.

Wandering, benighted sinner, lift up thine eyes, and behold this bright and morning star! Follow its radiant beams, and it will lead thee to happiness and eternal life. Penitent inquirer, open thy heart, and receive what God is offering thee; for he says: "I will give him the morning star;" Rev. ii. 28. Believers, walk in its light—gaze intensely upon it—look to it at all times, and it shall guide thee to the realms of blissful and unending day

SKELETON LXXXI

THE MIRACLE OF THE LOAVES AND FISHES.

"And when it was evening, his disciples came to him, saying, This is a desert place, and the time is now past; send the multitude away," &c.—*Matt.* xiv. 15–21

Christ performed such mighty works as no other man did. His miracles were numerous, public, full of mercy and compassion, and were all performed by his own power and in his own name. Let us at present consider the miracle of the loaves and fishes; and in doing so, I. Explain and illustrate the various Circumstances connected with it. And notice, II. The spiritual Lessons which it teaches.

I. *Explain and illustrate the various Circumstances connected with the Miracle.*

Notice,

1. The occasion of the miracle.

Christ had been healing and teaching the people; the multitude had been so deeply interested, as to forget the necessary wants of the body; were ready to faint for want of food.

2. The place where the miracle was wrought.

It was "a desert place." Had they been in a city or village where provision could have been obtained, a miracle would have been unnecessary. Christ never wrought one superfluous miracle. Here it was necessary that he should convince the people, that he could spread a table for them in the wilderness.

3. The laudable anxiety of the disciples. They desired that the people might be

dismissed, that they might retire and buy victuals in the villages. This was considerate and humane. We ought never to forget that our fellow-creatures have bodies as well as souls; and if we see a brother or a sister destitute of food, and feel not for them, how dwells the love of God in us! Notice

4. The surprising reply of the Redeemer.

"They need not go away." Not only was the Messiah in the midst of them, but that Messiah was the God of nature and providence; whose hands were daily opened for the supplying of every living thing with good. He then directed them to see what provision they possessed. This was necessary, that it might appear, first, that a miracle was really indispensable; and secondly, that the miracle might appear in its true and real character. It was found that five loaves or biscuits, and two small fishes, were all the provisions they could collect. How totally inadequate to the demands of the many thousands, the hungry multitude! Observe,

5. The commands Christ gave to his disciples.

(1) That the provisions should be brought to him. He did not despise and cast away the loaves and fishes; but made them, as it were, the seed-corn of that abundant supply which he was about to provide. The loaves and fishes were quite unavailing in the hands of the disciples; therefore Christ received them, that his almighty power might be employed upon them.

(2) He commanded the multitude to sit down. That all might be done in order; that the number might be accurately ascertained; and that all might be easily and fully supplied. Then notice,

6. Christ's conduct with respect to the provisions.

He took it, lifted up his eyes to heaven, gave thanks, blessed it, and brake it. What an example of piety and devotion! How anxious to acknowledge and glorify his Father! What majesty and glory would be seen in the mien and actions of Jesus on this occasion! Then notice,

7. The mode of distribution adopted.

"He gave it to his disciples, and they gave it to the people." Thus did he exhibit his own headship and authority, and thus did he recommend his disciples to the people, as the almoners of his bounty, and the officers of his kingdom. Then observe,

8. The creation and multiplication of the food which took place.

The disciples went forth, supplying each with an abundance; and as they distributed, it increased in their baskets, so that five thousand men, besides, no doubt, as many more women and children, ate and were filled.

Notice,

9. The lesson of frugality which Jesus taught.

He then said: "Gather up the fragments, that nothing be lost." And behold, twelve baskets of fragments remained! Many thousand times more than the stock with which the meal was commenced! God is the source of abundance; but he will not sanction extravagance or waste. Let us consider,

II. *The Spiritual Lessons which the Miracle affords.*

1. In the people we see a striking representation of the moral condition of the human family.

In a desert world—starving for want of food—no human means of supply.

2. In the provision we see a true exhibition of the blessings of the gospel.

Its source, Jesus; its apparent insufficiency, yet its abundance, yea, inexhaustibleness. Its freeness and cheapness; without money and without price. Its satisfying nature; all ate and were filled.

3. In its distribution we see the nature of the office of the Christian ministry.

It is, to receive from Christ's hands the bread of life, and to give it to a dying world. It is Christ's provision only they are to distribute.

4. In the abundance remaining we see the boundlessness of gospel supplies.

> "Enough for all, enough for each;
> Enough for evermore."

Myriads have eaten, and yet the bread is undiminished. We learn,

5. That personal participation of gospel blessings is necessary to our happiness and satisfaction.

We must not only be of the multitude, and hear, and see, and sit down with them; but we must, also, eat, receive Christ into our hearts by faith; and thus only can we enjoy the blessings of God's great, and full and abundant salvation. The invitation is

"Come ye, buy and eat; yea, buy wine and milk, without money, and without price."

SKETCH LXI.

SHAME OF CHRIST, AND ITS CONSEQUENCES.

"For whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he shall come in his own glory, and in his Father's, and of the holy angels."—*Luke* ix. 26.

OBSERVE, that in the text there are two distinct parts: I. A Course of Conduct specified. And, II. The inevitable Results declared.

I. *A Course of Conduct specified.*

"Whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words." This course of conduct is exhibited,

1. In a skeptical rejection of Christ as the true Messiah.

The Jews were guilty of it, and are so to this day All infidels, from the professed atheist downwards to the deist, are guilty of it. It is exhibited,

2. In an unbelieving disregard to his demands and authority.

This is the course pursued by all practically wicked and profane persons. They do not regard his addresses; they do not believe his statements; nor do they fear his threatenings. His word is light, but they love darkness; his doctrines are holy, but they love impurity; his commands are righteous, but they love iniquity. It is exhibited,

3. In a compromising spirit of conformity to the world.

Christ says, "follow me," and they profess to do so; but they will not forsake the world—they do not leave all—they will not deny themselves—they shun the cross; they cry "Hosanna!" with his friends; but when he is reviled and persecuted, they follow afar off, or walk no more with him. It is exhibited,

4. In a neglect of his ordinances, and in avoiding a public profession of him before men.

It is a duty to love Christ, and to believe in him; it is equally so, to profess both. His *words* require us to confess him before men—to be his witnesses—to be known as his friends—to walk in his steps—and scrupulously to observe all his ordinances To neglect these, is to be ashamed of him as our lawgiver, and to despise his words. It is exhibited,

5. In an unwillingness to consecrate all we are and have to his service.

His demands extend to body, soul, estate influence, in short, to all. We are not our own, but his redeemed property. A retaining any thing he requires, or living in any way to ourselves, is to be ashamed of him and his words. However poor his people, however scorned and hated his name or religion, it is our duty to display an entire and unchanging attachment to him and his blessed cause. Half-heartedness and coldness are really criminal in his account.

Then consider,

II. *The inevitable Results declared.*

"Of him shall the Son of man be ashamed," &c. The result shall be,

1. That such shall receive a similar return.

They have sown shame, and shame they shall reap: while saints are received, they shall be rejected; while saints are honored, they shall be disgraced; while saints are rewarded, they shall be excluded, and cast into outer darkness, &c.

2. Christ shall be ashamed of them.

He, who is now so anxious to save them, who has died for them; he, whose love has astonished both earth and heaven—which angels cannot fathom, nor any but God understand—will cease to pity and love them, and will now be ashamed of them!

3. He will be ashamed of them in the day of his glory.

When he will appear in all his original and uncreated glories, as Jehovah's fellow and equal, and the Lord of angels. When he shall wear many crowns, and be accompanied by a splendid retinue of holy angels. When princes will deem it their highest honor to bend before his feet.

4. He will be ashamed of them when the dispensation of grace will have ceased forever.

Now there is forgiveness for all our shame and rebellion against Christ; there is a throne of grace; there is the blessed gospel, the interceding Saviour. But then, the day of salvation shall have ended; the summer of opportunities be forever past; and the only throne shall be the great white one, described in the Revelation, xx. 11

&c., and which shall be a throne of judgment and a throne of doom.

O, then, prize the precious Saviour! Let him have your hearts, your lives, your profession, your all! And then, when he comes in his glory, he will own, confess, and reward you with a crown and place in his kingdom, forever and ever

SKETCH LXII.

GOD FOR HIS PEOPLE.

"What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?"—*Rom.* viii 31

THE text forms the application of the discourse which is presented to us in the preceding part of the chapter. That discourse comprehends a complete outline of Christian experience, commencing in the day of the believer's reconciliation to God, and terminating in the triumphs of full and eternal salvation.

Observe in the text, there is, I. A Character which we must define. II. A Privilege which we must illustrate. And, III. An important Interrogation which we must explain and answer.

Notice in the text,

I. *A Character which we must define.*

"If God be for *us*," &c.

Now the character is the same as is presented to our notice through the whole chapter. They are represented,

1. As being in Christ, and therefore justified. Ver. 1.

2. As regenerated. Ver. 2, 3.

3. As sanctified. Ver. 4.

4. As under spiritual influence. Ver. 5, 9, 11, 14.

5. As adopted into the divine family. Ver. 15, 16. And,

6. As heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ. Ver. 17.

Now, a very slight attention to this description will lead us to a right knowledge of the characters who may properly assume the triumphant language of the text: 'If God be for us," &c.

In the text we have,

II. *A Privilege which we must illustrate.*

"If God be *for* us," &c.

In the divine word we read of God going before his people to lead them—God being with them, as their reconciled friend—God being round about them, as their defence—God being in them, as their light and salvation. But the language of the text represents God as being *for us*. It comprehends all mentioned in the preceding observations; and more especially it includes,

1. The possession of the divine favor.

God being for us, is God reconciled, God loving and delighting in us, as his people—smiling upon us in the face of his Anointed One. Where this is possessed, there his love will be shed abroad in the heart; and the enjoyment of that divine peace which passeth all understanding; Psal. xxx. 5; lxxxix. 17; Isai. lx. 10. It includes,

2. An interest in all the divine perfections.

God, being for us, engages all his attributes on our side. His power is ours, to sustain and protect us; his wisdom, to guide and direct us; his goodness, to supply our wants; his holiness, to purify our hearts; his mercy, pity, and patience, to forbear, to pass by our infirmities, and to forgive our sins; his truth, to verify all his promises. All that the blessed God is and has, is for the benefit of his people: "I am thy God." It includes,

3. A believing claim to all his great and precious promises.

These are the Christian's present riches. These refer to every conceivable state and circumstance. They are exceedingly great and precious. And they are all given to us; and are "yea and amen in Christ Jesus to them that believe;" 2 Cor. i. 20; 2 Pet. i. 4.

In the text there is,

III. *An Interrogation which we must endeavor to explain and answer.*

"If God be for us, *who can be against us?*" Let us,

1. Explain the interrogation.

(1) It does not mean that, God being for us, none will really be against us. This is contrary to the statements of Scripture, and experience of all God's people. Satan will be against us—world against us—internal enemies against us. There would be no conflict were none against us.

(2) Neither does it mean, that our enemies are insignificant, and unworthy of our notice. For they are powerful, malignant, combined, and desperate. They are, also very numerous.

"They throng the air, and darken heaven,
And crowd this lower world."

Eph. vi. 12.

(3) Neither does it mean, that we may not suffer, and that severely, from those who are against us. We may suffer much; temptation, persecution, reproach, loss of goods, and even life itself, may be required. But it signifies that, God being for us, none can be effectually against us. Our adversaries shall not succeed—our souls shall not suffer final loss—for he that is for us is greater than all that are against us. Let us then,

2. Endeavor to answer the interrogation.

(1) If God be for us in the arrangements of grace, who can be against us? If he justifies, who can condemn? If he sanctifies and adopts us, who shall pollute and cast us out? If he loves us, who shall change his mind? If he saves, who shall destroy? John x. 27, 28.

(2) If God be for us in the dispensations of his providence, who can be against us? The cloud may be dark, but it shall shed down blessings on our heads. The bud may be bitter, but sweet will be the flower. "All things shall work," &c.; ver. 28. His eye will watch over us—his ear be open to our cry—his hand supply our need—his arm keep and protect us.

(3) If God be for us in the spiritual combat, who can be against us? Men may rage; but the wrath of man shall be made to praise him, and the remainder he will restrain. Satan may roar, and bring his temptations upon the soul as a flood; but God's Spirit shall lift up a standard against him.

(4) If God be for us in the decisions of judgment, who can be against us? If he then smile, who shall frown? If he say, Well done! who shall condemn? If he pronounce us blessed, who shall make us accursed? If he place the crown upon our brow, who shall snatch it thence? If he exalt to glory and eternal life, who shall abase or mar our felicity? It is clear, if God be for us, we need not fear nor care for all who may be against us.

APPLICATION.

Then, if God be for us,

1. Ought we not, also, to be for God? Shall we not honor and confess him before men—be zealous for his glory—diligent in his service, &c.?

2. Should we not be anxious to retain his friendship—to have him always on our side? Let us cultivate his fear in our hearts; walk humbly and devoutly before him.

3. Let the sinner learn the only way of safety—by being reconciled to God. How dreadful an enemy is God! Who shall contend with him? Let the sinner throw down his weapons and sue for peace, and by faith in Christ Jesus, he shall be accepted of God, and saved to eternal life

SKETCH LXIII.

JOHN'S VISION OF THE CHURCH

"And being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks, and in the midst of the seven candlesticks, one like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle. His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow," &c., &c.—*Rev.* i 12–16.

INTRODUCTION.—Concise view of John's history—Exemption from martyrdom—Banishment by Domitian to the Isle of Patmos—The revelation there made to him—His happy and spiritual frame of mind on the Lord's day; ver. 10—The voice he heard; ver. 10—His attention arrested; and when he turned to behold from whom the voice proceeded, the splendid scene presented before him: "And being turned, I saw," &c. In this passage we have a striking representation of the church of Christ. "I saw," says John, "seven golden candlesticks."

Notice,

I. *The Figure to which the Church is likened.*

"A candlestick." Evidently in allusion to the candlestick in the tabernacle; Exod xxv. 31, &c.

1. An instrument for holding, or being a receptacle of light.

The church is the depository of sacred light—the pillar and ground of truth—the residence of the Holy Spirit—the place of spiritual manifestations. As a candlestick, the church is not only the holder, but an instrument,

2. For the diffusion of light.

It receives light to shed it abroad. God says to Zion, "Arise, shine," &c. "Ye are the lights of the world." "City set on a hill." The church diffuses the light of

gospel doctrines, of Christian principles, of practical holiness, and divine benevolence and mercy.

Notice,

II. *The Quality of the Church.*

"*Golden* candlesticks."

1. Golden, to represent the purity of the church.

Not a worldly, polluted society; but a separated, holy, and peculiar people. Washed, and sanctified, and justified by the Spirit and word of God.

2. Golden, to represent the rarity of the church.

Gold is the most scarce of all metals. The church is like a small bush in the midst of the wilderness—a little city in the world's extensive and dreary desert. Christ calls it "a little flock."

3. Golden, on account of its preciousness and value.

Gold, as it is the rarest, so it is the most valuable of metals. The church is Jehovah's treasure—his portion—his palace and temple—his delight and rest. It is engraven on the palms of his hands, and its walls are ever before him. He keeps it as the apple of his eye.

4. Golden, on account of its durability.

A kingdom that shall never be moved. It shall never be razed; but shall appear in all the resplendent glories of holiness forever and ever. The clay and the brass of all worldly associations and kingdoms shall be thrown down and destroyed; but the golden kingdom of Christ is an everlasting kingdom, and his spiritual reign shall never end. Notice,

III. *The Numerical Description of the Church.*

"*Seven* golden candlesticks." Representing literally the seven Asiatic churches. Spiritually, the term may relate to the completeness of the church, as the number seven in Scripture, indicates perfection. On the seventh day God rested from his work, and blessed and hallowed it. The seventh year was a sabbatical year. We read, also, of seven priests—seven trumpets—seven churches—seven seals—seven Spirits—seven angels, &c. Admitting the term to indicate perfection, how does it apply to the church? The members of the church are not personally perfect here; neither is the church perfect in its collective form. It is an unfinished building. It is a growing body. The church of Jesus, however, may be said to be perfect,

1. In its head.

Christ is the head of the body, the church. No weakness or fallibility can be ascribed to him.

2. The church is perfect in its ordinances.

All that the wisdom of God deemed necessary for its fruitfulness, and comfort, and salvation. Shall never receive any more.

3. Perfect in its revelations.

The whole completed word of God. The entire and all-sufficient Scriptures of truth.

4. Perfect in its spiritual influences.

Spirit of truth, of light, of purity, and of consolation, abiding in it forever.

5. Perfect, inasmuch as the church, under the new covenant, shall not be superseded by any superior dispensation of things, until the morning of millennial glory; and to this glorious era the church is daily advancing.

IV. *The Visibility of the Church is stated.*

"I saw," says John, "seven golden candlesticks."

The church is not a concealed society; but it has a visible appearance in our world.

1. It is visible to the heaven-born soul—

And having found the way to Zion, he becomes one of her holy and happy inhabitants, seeks her peace, and prays for her prosperity always.

2. It is visible to the world—

And they hate it, because they are condemned by it, and because it proclaims war against all its principles and fashions.

3. It is visible to malignant and fallen spirits—

And the gates of hell are in unceasing hostility to its interests.

4. It is visible to the blessed and glorious Jehovah—

And his eyes and his heart are there perpetually.

5. It is visible to angels—

And they watch over it, minister to its inhabitants, and are ever encamped round about it.

APPLICATION.

How beautiful is the Zion of our God! How happy her inhabitants! How dignified and numerous her privileges! How anxious

should all her sons and daughters be to exhibit to all around the light of truth, the beauties of holiness! How miserable, how dreary, how hopeless, would be the condition of our world without it!

SKETCH LXIV.

JOHN'S VISION OF THE GLORIOUS REDEEMER.

"And in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks one like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle. His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow," &c. &c.—*Rev.* i. 13–16.

Refer to the preceding sketch, where John has a vision of the church of Christ under the representation of seven golden candlesticks. Having beheld the seven golden candlesticks, he now perceives in the midst of them the blessed and adorable Redeemer; whom he recognises as bearing those well-remembered features which he had when dwelling in our world as the Son of man Then he describes, in language the most sublime, the particulars of that glorious scene presented before him.

Now, in this vision of the Redeemer there was exhibited,

I. *The Emblems of his Eternity.*

"His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow."

When Daniel beheld the Messiah, and describes him as the Ancient of Days, he gives a similar description: "And the hair of his head was like the pure wool;" Dan. vii. 9. When speaking words revealed by he wise man, Jesus says: "I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was," &c.; Prov. viii. 23–31. Jesus also asserted the same, when he said to the Jews: "Before Abraham was, I am;" John viii. 58. And also when addressing John, he says: "I am Alpha and Omega," &c.; Rev. i. 8.

Christ was exhibited,

II. *In his unbounded Wisdom and Omniscience.*

"And his eyes were as a flame of fire." So brilliant, so searching and penetrating, as a flame of fire. He sees all clearly from eternity to eternity. All is naked before him; and hell itself without a covering. His eyes are in every place He knows the heart; and he searcheth and trieth the reins of the children of men. He knew what his disciples thought. He knew the views of the Pharisees; Matt. xii. 25. He knew what Judas purposed. He knew what agitated the breasts of the two disciples going to Emmaus. His knowledge is perfect, unbounded, and eternal. John ii 25; xxi. 15, &c.

Christ was exhibited,

III. *In his Immutability, and in the Greatness of his Power.*

"And his feet like unto fine brass," &c.

Hard, and stable, and immutable in all his purposes, and ways, and works. Not affected by any of the changing scenes, either of the church, or of the world; "same yesterday, to-day, and forever." Then, "his voice was as the sound of many waters;" majestic, powerful, and irresistible. "The voice of the Lord is powerful; the voice of the Lord is powerful." Job says: "He thundereth with his voice;" xxxvii. 5. "He uttered his voice, the earth melted;" Psalm xl. 6. When on earth, His voice made devils to tremble and flee before him. It stilled the storm; and it shook the invisible world, and brought back the spirits of the departed. How inconceivably great and powerful is the Lord our God!

In this vision John beheld the Redeemer,

IV. *In his Sacerdotal Robe.*

"Clothed with a garment down to the foot."

Thus appearing in his sacred apparel as the great High Priest of our profession. Daniel describes this garment as being "white as snow." Representing the unsullied purity of his nature, as the Holy One of God; his perfect righteousness, as the Just One of Israel; and his personal merit, as the Mediator between God and man, and who, by his death, had opened a way of access to the holiest of all. "For such an High Priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners;" Heb. vii. 26.

He was exhibited,

V. *In his tender and unchanging Attachment to His People.*

"Girt about the paps with a golden girdle."

The golden girdle is the truth and purity of Christ. And this being girded round his breasts, denotes the sacred and unalterable fixedness of his affections upon his people A love disinterested, intense, unspeakable

and eternal A love which nothing can quench or destroy. A woman may forget her sucking child; yet will not the Lord forget or forsake his people.

In this vision Christ was exhibited,

VI. *In the Station which He occupies*

"In the midst of the golden candlesticks."

Christ is not only in his church, but in the midst of it. As the sun is the centre of the solar system, and as the tree of life was in the midst of Eden, so Christ is the grand centre of the Christian system, and in the midst of the garden of the church. He spake to Moses out of the midst of the bush. "Great is the Holy One of Israel, who is in the midst of thee;" Isai. xii. 6; Jer. xiv. 9; Zech. ii. 5. "Wherever two or three are met together, I will be in the midst of them;" Matt. xviii. 20. "Midst of the throne stood a Lamb;" Rev. v. 6. Now Christ is in the midst of his church, to illumine, to direct, to comfort, to protect, and to save. Being in the midst, he is equally near and accessible to all.

Christ was exhibited,

VII. *In his Connection with the Ministers of the Gospel.*

"And he had in his right hand seven stars."

Ministers resemble stars, as they are to diffuse their borrowed rays to a dark and benighted world. And, like stars, they differ in glory; some having one, others five, and others ten talents committed to their trust. These stars are in Christ's hand.

1. They are appointed by him.

2. They receive all their qualifications from him.

3. They manifest his glory, and all their strength and success are from him.

4. His hand guides, supports, protects, and will finally reward them.

Christ is exhibited,

VIII. *In the powerful Efficacy of his Truth.*

"And out of his mouth went a sharp two-edged sword."

His word is this sword: and it is "quick and powerful; sharper than any two-edged sword," &c.; Heb. iv. 12. "Word either savor of life unto life, or death unto death;" 2 Cor. ii. 15. Its saving edge is sharp to convince, to convert, to regenerate, and to sanctify the heart. And its killing edge is sharp to condemn, and to consign over the unbelieving to remediless and eternal wo.

Christ was exhibited,

IX. *In the overwhelming Glory of his Person.*

"And his countenance was as the sun shining in his strength."

So dazzlingly refulgent! No man could behold him, except as shrouded in the manhood, and live. So bright, that it will destroy his adversaries in the day of his second advent; 2 Thess. ii. 8. So bright, that it shall illumine the celestial temple, and render the light of the moon or the sun unnecessary; Rev. xxi. 23; xxii. 5. This Saviour let us believe, love, and obey; that we may rejoice, extol, and adore him for ever and ever.

SKETCH LXV.

ZION'S TRAVELLERS.

"And an highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called, The way of holiness," &c.—*Isai* xxxv. 8–10.

WHATEVER primary reference this prophecy might have to the return of the tribes from captivity, it is evident, that all its interesting and beautiful description can only be fully realized in the blessedness and glory of the gospel dispensation. We design to consider it as spiritually referring to the gospel way of salvation.

In doing so we have,

I. *The Way itself, and its distinguishing Characteristics.*

A religious course is often spoken of as a way. It is called the way of *wisdom*—the way of *life*—the *good old* way—the *narrow* way, &c. Now, the way of religious experience consists in an affectionate and believing obedience to the Lord Jesus Christ. Religion, in its essence, is love—in its vital spirit, faith—and in its visible evidence, obedience to God. Now, this way to heaven is described in the text,

1. As a highway.

Not a private path; not a secluded by-way; but a royal public highway; a way broken up, and opened by the authority of the King of kings; a way fully revealed, and extensively published in the gospel; a way designed for the general accommodation of the human race, and leading to the

metropolis of the universe, Zion, the city of the great King.

2. It is a holy way.

"Shall be called, The way of holiness," &c. Its Founder is holy. It was opened by the obedience of the Holy One of God. It was designed for the promotion of holiness. And none who remain unclean can walk within it. God calls us to holiness. Gospel salvation consists in holiness. Christ's people are a holy and peculiar people, &c.

3. It is a plain way.

"It shall be for those, the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein." Not a way requiring extensive philosophical knowledge, or deep metaphysical research, to comprehend it; but a way adapted to the poor and illiterate. Gospel requirements of faith and repentance, of obedience and self-denial, plain. Gospel ordinances and duties all plain. How plain Christ's addresses! How adapted are all the essential portions of the blessed Scriptures to make men wise unto salvation!

4. It is a safe way.

"No lion shall be there," &c. Satan may invite and try to allure us from the way; but he cannot intercept us while walking in it. No: God protects it; he is the shield, the refuge, and the fortress of his people. "Who shall harm us," &c. "If God be for us," &c.

Let us notice,

II. *The Character of its Travellers.*

"The redeemed of the Lord shall walk there."

1. Once they were slaves.

Slaves of sin and Satan; held in a state of degrading vassalage; outcasts ready to perish; without God, and Christ, and hope in the world; Eph. ii. 12, 13.

2. They have been redeemed.

By the precious blood of Jesus Christ. Redeemed to God; redeemed from sin, and the power of Satan, and the wrath to come.

3. As redeemed, they are now the Lord's freemen.

Have believingly received the message of reconciliation with great joy. Now sons; members of the divine family; sharers of the divine goodness and peace; and they bear a holy resemblance to the divine image.

Observe we have,

III. *The Mode of their Journeying described.*

"And they shall return and come to Zion with songs."

1. They sing the praises of their great Deliverer.

"Unto him who loved us," &c.

2. They sing on account of the deliverance itself.

"Brought up out of the mire and clay, and horrible pit," &c. "Plucked as brands from the burning." Saved from sin, and the curse, and eternal death.

3. They sing on account of the joys of their present experience.

Christ within them; hope and peace within; first-fruits of the Spirit within; love of God within, &c.

4. They sing on account of their glorious prospects.

For

> "They can read their title clear,
> To mansions in the skies."

A good hope, blooming with immortality. "Heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ."

We have,

IV. *The Termination of their Journey stated.*

"Everlasting joy shall be upon their heads," &c.

1. They shall be crowned with joy.

They shall have given to them a bright and radiant crown of joy that shall never fade away.

2. They shall possess a perfect fulness of felicity.

"They shall obtain joy and gladness." From the fountain-head of bliss. Pure without mixture; in rich abundance; until their capacities are filled unutterably full of glory and of God. And,

3. Their felicity shall be uninterrupted and eternal.

"Sorrow and sighing shall flee away." All the occasions of sorrow shall be left in the wilderness. Possibility of sorrow destroyed. Their eyes shall never weep, and their hearts never experience bitterness any more. Day without night; world without sin, without death, and without curse forever.

APPLICATION.

Travellers to Zion, go forward, diligently, and patiently, and joyfully. Urge sinners to enter upon these bright and joyous paths. Warn the impenitent, that the way of transgressors is hard, and leads to eternal death.

SKETCH LXVI.

THE LORD'S PLANTATION.

"The righteous shall flourish like the palm-tree; he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon: those that be planted in the house of the Lord, shall flourish in the courts of our God," &c.—*Psalm* xcii. 12–14.

THE people of God are sometimes likened to the vine; sometimes to the willow, to the fir-tree, to the fig-tree, to the olive-tree, to the myrtle, &c. In the text they are likened to the palm-tree, and to the cedars of Lebanon.

Let us, I. Explain and illustrate the Metaphors employed, ver. 12. II. Notice their situation, ver. 13. And, III. God's gracious Declarations concerning them, ver. 14. Let us then,

I. *Explain and illustrate the Metaphors employed.*

They are likened to the palm-tree, and to the cedars in Lebanon.

1. They are likened to the palm-tree.

The palm is one of the most interesting and useful trees in Palestine. It grows from forty to one hundred feet high; and bears the rich fruit of dates, in large clusters, hanging down from the top of the tree, one of which often yields two hundred weight. The palm is thirty years in arriving at maturity, and will bear fruit for seventy or a hundred years afterwards. It requires little attention, except to be well watered every four or five days. What a beautiful emblem of the pious man! "Like the palm-tree."

(1) In its straight and towering height. Wicked are compared to briers, and brambles, and thorns.

(2) In its rich fruitfulness. He yields rich fruit to God. Heart fruit—lip fruit—life fruit; and the fruit of benevolence and goodness to the world at large.

(3) Bears his fruit like the palm-tree, especially in connection with his head, Jesus, without whom he can do nothing.—John xiv. 1–6.

(4) Like the palm-tree, the Christian can dispense with the attentions and pleasures of the world; his happiness and fruitfulness depend entirely on the flowing streams of heavenly grace.

2. They are likened to the cedars of Lebanon.

The mountains of Lebanon form the northern boundary of Judea, are white in appearance, and are celebrated for their lofty flourishing cedars. The good man may be compared to the cedar of Lebanon, on account,

(1) Of his elevated situation. "He is an inhabitant of the rock." "Lives on high," &c. Isaiah xliii. 11. Psalm xl 1, &c.

(2) Like the cedar, he is an evergreen. His leaf never withers. Bears fruit in every season and condition of life, and even in death itself.

(3) Like the cedar, for his fragrance, and pleasant aromatic perfume. The Christian is fragrant to God in all his graces and services. And he is so to the church in all his virtues, and spirit, and conversation.

(4) Like the cedar, he is used in the erection of God's spiritual house. 1 Kings vi. 9. The Lord's spiritual house is composed of the cedars of his gracious plantation.

(5) Like the cedar for its incorruptibility. Cedar is said to resist all those insects which cause decay. What a beautiful emblem of the Christian! He is spiritual, incorruptible, and immortal. His graces, his happiness, his spirit, shall exist forever. He shall never perish, but inherit eternal life.

Now let us notice,

II. *Their Situation.*

"Planted in the house of the Lord—in the courts of our God." It is implied,

1. That they are exotics.

Originally they were a part of the wild olive; strangers to God and his church. In the wilderness, yielding the bitter wild-fruit of sin.

2. That instrumentality has been employed with respect to them.

They have been "planted." God, by his word and holy Spirit, has cut them off from the wild olive, brought them out of themselves, and sin, and the world, and planted them in his own vineyard.

3 They are planted in the Lord's house, in the courts of our God.

That is, in his church—his spiritual family.

(1) A place separated from the world.

(2) A fruitful place, where the rays of the Sun of Righteousness, and the holy waters of the sanctuary, are constantly enjoyed.

(3) A place protected and favored with

the peculiar smile and blessing of God. This is the situation God has *designed* for them, the situation which they *love*. No other situation where the Lord's plants can grow and thrive.

Notice,

III. *God's gracious Declarations concerning them.*

It is said,

1. That they shall flourish.

Be verdant and fruitful. Answer the end of their proprietor. Be happy, holy, and useful.

2. That they shall grow like the cedar.

Increase in height, and strength, and beauty. Grow upwards in heavenly-mindedness, and conformity to the Divine image. Strike their roots deeper, and spread their branches in every direction. Grow in grace, and in meetness for eternal glory.

3. They shall bring forth fruit in old age.

Other plants generally fail then. Not so the people of God; they ripen for another and a better world. Abraham, Jacob, David, Zachariah, Simeon, &c.

4. They shall be fat and flourishing.

Fully and perfectly holy and happy. Enjoy the riches of divine grace; and manifest, in the graces and virtues of the Christian character, the glory of God. Entirely meet for the beatific vision, and the consummate glories of the heavenly world. How dignified, happy, safe, and glorious the Christian character! Happy the people in such a case; yea, happy is that people whose God is the Lord

SKETCH LXVII.

By the Rev Parsons Cooke, *of Ware, Massachusetts.*

THE UNKNOWN DEPTHS OF SIN.

"Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do!"—*Luke* xxiii. 34.

Sin is quite a different thing in fact, from what it is in the general estimation of sinners. This truth I shall in this discourse endeavor to illustrate and carry round to different classes of sinners. In order to this, I shall attempt to show, in the *first place*, how sinners come at such limited and inadequate views of sin. In the *second place*, I shall show that their views of it *are thus limited*. And in the *third place apply* the truth to different classes of sinners.

I. *How do Sinners come at their Notion that Sin is so trifling an affair?*

1. They have a very limited view of their own feelings and purposes while in a course of sin; and infer that they cannot be very guilty, because they have never been conscious of a very evil intention.

In all sin, perhaps, they do not remember of having once intended harm against God or his kingdom. They are so deceived as to think that they have had no evil intention, and no feeling of opposition to God. when, in fact, the whole course of their affections has been opposed to God, when they have been hardening themselves against all the kindness of God expressed in the gospel, and been wading recklessly through the currents of redeeming blood.

2. Many derive their limited views of their sins from their meager conceptions of the Divine law.

They forget that God is a Spirit, and that he brings the thoughts and desires, as really as the doings of the hands and the motions of the tongue, under the control of his law. They imagine God makes little account of what passes within, and do not regard the law as a transcript of the heart of God.

3. Others erect a bar to conviction of personal guilt out of materials taken from infirmities incident to human nature.

They refer all to the common infirmity of the species, and they feel as little sense of personal guilt as they do for not having the power of angels.

4. Others diminish their conceptions of their guilt, by comparing themselves with greater sinners.

They see, perhaps, the majority of men in deeper wickedness than themselves, and hence conclude that their own sin is small Instead of looking into the mirror of God's law, they measure themselves by the standard which a sinful world has set up. And by such a standard they are able to pronounce almost any decent course of life sinless. In this way, they hinder all just apprehensions of guilt.

5. Sin appears very different according to the different light and circumstances in which it is seen.

A man in the midst of sinful associates takes less account of sin than he does in

the society of the godly. Sin, when seen from a dying bed, appears more dreadful than when death and judgment are put far away. And still more dreadful and odious will it appear when the light of heaven pours its rays upon it.

6. Again, delay of punishment goes to confirm men in the opinion that sin is a trifle.

"Because sentence against an evil work," &c. If every sin were followed immediately by its due visitation of God's displeasure, how would the world's opinion of sin be changed! We come now to show,

II. *That their Views of Sin are exceedingly limited, or that Sin is quite another Thing in Fact, from what it is in the Sinner's Estimation.*

1. It is very different in its effects from what they esteem it.

They are unaware that the kingdom of God is a kingdom of spirits; and that rebellion of spirit as effectually invades this kingdom, as the fire and sword of civil war does an earthly realm. If God be true, the judgment-day will make such disclosures of the mischiefs done by sins of heart, as will cause a guilty world to stand aghast.

2. Sin is very different if we consider the state of heart which gives birth to it.

A man will swear profanely, and offer such insults to heaven, as one would think would cause the earth to tremble under him. He will treat with marked neglect, all the institutions of God; will make light of them, will scoff at them; and yet feel that all was done out of mere thoughtlessness, or perhaps what he will term mere good nature. God views sin in a very different light to this. He is surely in the right, and he will one day make it appear to your everlasting conviction.

3. The costly expiation for sin shows it to be no trifle.

We see what a deep and inflexible hatred God had for sin, when his own Son stood in the place of the sinner. "Spared not his own Son," &c.

4. The retributions of eternity will make sin to appear quite another thing from what it is here esteemed—

When all the generations of the world are crowding around the throne of judgment, and when the design of all the preparation and parade of that day will be to make discoveries of sin. Last sentence Eternal darkness, &c.

III *Let us apply the Truth to different Classes of Sinners.*

1. The profane swearer is accumulating an amount of guilt of which he is little aware.

The same applies to the *scoffer*, the *man of sensual pleasure*, the *worshipper of Mammon*, those who are spending the season of youth in neglect; &c.

2. Sinners know not what they do when they refuse to love our Lord Jesus Christ.

"If any man love not the Lord," &c.

3. Those who continue to grieve the Holy Spirit, know not what they do.

This is a sin that is aimed most directly against the life of the soul. To resist the gospel is a sin of deep malignity; but it is more to resist the Holy Spirit, and deny him admittance when he seeks it into the heart. Sinners will find in the other world charges against them, not only for resisting, but for violating, their own convictions.

SKETCH LXVIII.

By the Rev. Silas M'Keen, *Bradford, Vermont.*

SINNERS ENTREATED TO SEEK THE LORD.

"Seek ye the Lord while he may be found; call ye upon him while he is near."—*Isaiah* lv. 6.

Let us consider,

I. *How we should seek the Lord.*

The Lord reveals himself to us, in the context, in the endearing character of a gracious Saviour from sin and wo, and it is in that respect, especially, that he is to be sought. To seek the Lord aright,

1. We must believe that he is such a Saviour as he is declared to be in Scripture.

The Scriptures are the only source of information on this subject. In particular we must believe that Jesus Christ is the only Saviour of men, that he has made an atonement altogether sufficient for all who shall ever come to him, and will certainly save all who comply with the terms on which salvation is offered; and that he is in all respects worthy of the highest love and firmest confidence of every heart.

2. We must realize our personal need of his salvation.

We must be convinced that we have transgressed the Divine law, and are justly condemned by it. That we can make no satisfaction to Divine justice for our sins. And that except we are saved by the Lord Jesus, we must forever lie down in sorrow. These convictions must sink deep into your hearts before you will be induced to come to Jesus.

3. We must be willing, nay, anxiously desire, to embrace Christ in his entire character, and on his own terms.

He has revealed the only way in which it is consistent with his glory to save us, and he surely will never propose any other terms. If we properly seek him to save us in his own way, it must be with the heart. "With the heart man believeth," &c. "Ye shall find me when ye shall search for me with *all your heart*." Our heart and flesh must cry out for the living God. We must not only be earnest, but must *cordially receive* him when we do find him.

II. *What is meant in the text by finding the Lord.*

To find him, is to find by experience that he is such a glorious and blessed Saviour as he is declared to be in the Scriptures. Those who find Christ, will find,

1. That he is, and ever has been, acquainted with your heart, and all your ways.

The woman of Samaria said, "Come, see a man who told me all things I ever did," &c. David said, "O Lord, thou hast searched me," &c. You will find,

2. That he is perfectly holy, and looks on sin with infinite displeasure.

And this view of his glory will humble you in the dust before him. Isaiah exclaimed, "Wo is me! for I am undone," &c.—vi. 5, &c. You will nevertheless find,

3. The Saviour to be most benevolent and merciful.

None but the contrite sinner can rightly understand or properly appreciate the nature and worth of his goodness and grace. He is penetrated with a deep conviction of his great criminality, and therefore cannot think of that mercy which has hitherto saved from hell, but with deep emotions of gratitude.

4. You will find him worthy of the highest love, the firmest confidence, and the most entire obedience.

Therefore, they cheerfully consecrate to him body and soul. Surrender to him their hearts, confide in his declarations, and bow to his authority.

5. You will find that he is a portion sufficient to satisfy the most enlarged desires of the soul.

You have sought happiness elsewhere, it has seemed within your reach, but you have been constantly disappointed. But whenever you find the Saviour, your wearied spirit will rest in him with entire satisfaction. You will say, "Thou art my portion." "My wisdom." "My righteousness, sanctification, and redemption." "My all and in all"

III. *At what Time may the Saviour be found?*

"Seek ye the Lord while he may be found."

Life is the opportunity given for seeking and finding the Lord.

In eternity, the time of our probation will forever terminate. Life is so uncertain, that the present *now* is the only time we can really and truly calculate upon. If a cure is ever to be effected, *now* is the best and perhaps the only time to obtain it. Launched on the current of time, and silently rolling onwards to the ocean of a dark and miserable eternity, the further you are borne along, the more difficult will be your return. There are, however, especial and particular times when the Saviour may readily be found.

For instance,

(1) "The time of youth." Eccles. xii. 1; Prov. viii. 17.

(2) When favored with the means of religious instruction—word—gospel ordinances, opportunities, &c.

(3) When his work is revived in your neighborhood. Spirit poured out. Many going up to the Lord's house, &c. O, then, seek the Lord. Do not shun his mercy. Do not trifle. Do not delay. Now the Lord is graciously near: if thou seek him, he will be found of thee, &c

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SKELETON LXXXII.

SALVATION IN CHRIST JESUS.

"The salvation which is in Christ Jesus."—2 *Tim.* ii. 10.

The text. I. Exhibits to us a distin

guished Person—' Christ Jesus." II. Refers to an invaluable Blessing—"Salvation." And, III. Specifies the peculiar Source of this Blessing—"Which is in Christ Jesus."

The text,

I. *Exhibits to us a distinguished Person.*

"Christ Jesus."

1. Christ, or the Anointed.

Jesus was not only the gift of God, but he was God's holy and Anointed One; anointed by the full and copious outpouring of the Spirit, which descended upon him without measure. Anointed as our Prophet, Priest, and King; Deut. xviii. 15; Heb. iii. 1; 1 Tim. vi. 15; Luke iv. 18. He is also,

2. Jesus, that is, Saviour

And he was anointed Christ, that he might be the Saviour of the world. As Saviour, he possesses infinite dignity, almighty power, unbounded compassion, and exhaustless merit.

The subject,

II. *Refers to an invaluable Blessing.*

"Salvation."

Salvation implies guilt, and misery, and danger; and supposes deliverance from them. Now, gospel salvation is,

1. Complete.

It obliterates guilt, extinguishes misery, and delivers from danger. It has, also, a positive, as well as a negative influence. It justifies, gives peace, regenerates, sanctifies, and exalts to eternal life. It includes both body and soul.

2. It is present.

Not a future boon. Its beginning is here. Its deliverances and enjoyments are now to be possessed. "Behold, *now* is the accepted time," &c. "By grace *are* ye saved," &c. "But *now* are ye light," &c. "But *now* in Christ Jesus are made nigh."

3. It is eternal.

A salvation commensurate with the soul's duration. "I give unto my sheep eternal life," &c "Eternal glory;" 2 Tim. ii. 1. "Eternal redemption;" Heb. ix. 12. "Eternal inheritance;" Heb. ix. 15.

The text,

III. *Specifies the peculiar Source of the Blessing.*

"Which is in Christ Jesus."

1. Salvation is in his person.

He is emphatically the salvation of the sinner. "Behold, God is my salvation;" Isai. xii. 2; xlix. 6. When Simeon took him up in his arms, he said, "Mine eyes have seen thy salvation;" Luke ii. 30.

2. Salvation is in his blood.

"A propitiation through faith in his blood;" Rom. iii. 25. "Redemption through his blood;" Eph. i. 7; Col. i. 14 "Redeemed with the precious blood of Christ;" 1 Pet. i. 19.

3. Salvation is in his name.

"There is none other name," &c.; Acts iv. 12. Remission of sins preached in his name; Luke xxiv. 47. We become the sons of God by "believing in his name;" John i. 12. "Life through his name;" John xx. 31.

4. Salvation is in Christ's word or gospel.

"To you is the word of this salvation sent;" Acts xiii. 26 "Gospel of your salvation;" Eph. i. 13.

5. Salvation is Christ's gift.

"I give eternal life;" John x. 38. Christ shall bestow the crown of righteousness, &c.; crown of life; crown of glory, &c.; 2 Tim. iv. 8; 1 Pet. v. 4; Rev. ii. 10. See, also, John xvii. 2; vi. 8.

6. Salvation will chiefly consist in the enjoyment of Christ.

His favor—his image—his presence—his kingdom.

APPLICATION.

Our subject should lead the sinner to be solicitous about what is his chief good, salvation, and to seek for it in Christ, where alone it is to be found. Salvation is not in ourselves; it is not in man, nor in a profession, nor in ordinances, nor duties; but it is in *Christ Jesus;* and it is in him for all who believe in his name.

SKELETON LXXXIII.

INWARD FEARS.

"Within were fears."—2 *Cor.* vii. 5

Let us consider, The Nature—The Evil—and, The Remedy, for inward Fears.

I. *The Nature of inward Fears.*

There is a two-fold fear, which forms an essential part of the Christian character. (1) The fear of God. A filial fear of offending him. A fear arising from a right apprehension of his majesty, purity, and glory A fear which is the beginning of

wisdom. A fear to which we are exhorted: "Be thou in the fear of the Lord all the day long." "Fear the Lord, all ye his saints," &c. Now, this is a holy, affectionate passion, or rather principle, which is highly pleasing to God. (2) A fear, of holy vigilance and circumspection, in reference to ourselves. Which prompts to watchfulness and prayer. To which we are exhorted by the apostle: "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling." But the fears of the text are of a different description. They are fears which injure and depress the mind. There is,

1. A painful fear and dread of God.

Which never contemplates him except as arrayed in terror, and clothed with wrath. Devils have it, and they tremble. Where it exists, it enslaves the mind. How opposite to Jehovah's description of himself—as our benevolent Parent—unchanging Friend—constant Benefactor—great Redeemer—as one whose delight it is to bless and save to the uttermost all who come unto him by his Son!

2. Fears arising from imperfect views of redeeming love.

That God has not chosen us; Christ not died for us. That the Spirit hath not called us. That we are excluded from the blessings of the covenant. If we are sinners, Christ assuredly came to save *us*. If we have come to Christ, he will not, cannot cast out. If we believe in him, we shall be saved. Such fears generally arise from reflecting on what we imagine God may have purposed rather than what he hath revealed.

3. Fears arising from uncertainty as to our true state and character.

Fear that we are still in the gall of bitterness, unconverted, unrenewed, &c. Cannot pray, or praise, or serve, or love, as we would wish. These are all indications that our state is good. The impenitent unbeliever has no such doubts; he cares not, nor thinks at all about the matter. We could not be solicitous and concerned, were we not spiritually alive.

4. Fears arising from distrust of Divine Providence.

People of God often poor; often perplexed, and in straits. No doubt for their eternal advantage. God loves them, and cares for them. He is pledged to bless them with all real good, never to leave or forsake them. "Bread shall be given, &c. "Seek ye first," &c. Matt. vi. 25 33.

5. Fears arising from conscious imperfect services.

So frail, so infirm, so deficient of spirituality, &c. "God remembers our frame," &c. He expects only in proportion to our ability and circumstances. All would be rejected, but for the Mediator; however imperfect, if sincere, is accepted through his merit and intercession. Heb. xiv. 16.

6. Fears arising from our danger of apostacy and final ruin.

That we shall fall by the hands of our enemies; become castaways, &c. Observe, Christ keeps us. We are saved in him and by him. God will not forsake us, nor cast us off, for his great name's sake. Rom. viii. 31, 39.

7. Fears arising from a contemplation of death.

Of such the apostle speaks; Heb. ii. 15. Death cannot destroy us. Death is ours. Death shall usher us into undying life Death shall be eternal gain

Let us, then, glance,

II. *At the evils arising from inward Fears.*

1. They reflect upon the character of God.

The God of our fears, and the God of the Bible, are two different, two opposite beings. Our fears reflect upon his goodness, truth, faithfulness, mercy, compassion, &c. As such, they grieve the Holy Spirit of God, &c.

2. They give our enemies undue advantage over us.

Our fears rob us of strength, and produce in us debility and unfitness for the arduous duties and toils of the spiritual conflict.

3. They greatly impair our comfort and joy, and hinder our growth in the favor and life of God.

Hands hang down—knees feeble—hearts sad—eyes suffused with tears—soul beclouded, &c.

Let us, then, notice,

III. *The Remedy for inward Fears.*

1. A clear acquaintance with the divine word.

Especially the directions, gracious statements and direct promises of the Bible. These will enlighten our minds, and establish our hearts in the truth; and we

shall be fortified, and find ample resources against all our fears. Psal. cxix. 92; Eph. vi. 15.

2. Diligently regard the ordinances of God's house.

These are intended directly to strengthen, and comfort, and encourage us. Here we see our best friends; and "as iron sharpeneth iron," &c. Here we drink of the streams of the river of Zion, &c. Here we renew our strength, &c.

3. Constant communion with God.

Fellowship with him will exalt us above the trifling cares of the world It will increase our confidence and delight in him, and love to him; and we shall be clad with every grace and qualification for duty, conflict, and suffering. God is light, and dwells in light; and by communion with him we shall be raised above all the mists and clouds of distressing fears.

4. Fervent and persevering prayer.

If we pray without ceasing, we shall not find it difficult to rejoice evermore, and in every thing to give thanks. Is any afflicted in any way, either of body or mind, let him pray. "In all things, by prayer," &c.

APPLICATION.

1. Encourage the timid, yet sincere, inquirer. 2. The thoughtless sinner has every thing to dread. 3. The believer every thing great, and blessed, and glorious, to expect.

SKELETON LXXXIV.

THE RATIONALITY OF RELIGION.

"A sound mind."—2 *Tim.* i. 7.

RELIGION has been attacked in every possible way. It has especially been represented as grounded in mental weakness, and a sure sign of intellectual deficiency. The very opposite of this is the case. Sin is folly, the essence of folly—direct and ruinous folly. Religion is true wisdom, imparts real dignity, and is a sure evidence of a *sound mind.*

I. *A Sound Mind condemns all that is vain and trifling; so does Religion.*

Pleasures, riches, titles, and distinctions of this life, all empty, mere show, uncertain, and unsatisfactory. Now, while religion thus leads to a right estimation of these, she presents spiritual pleasure, heavenly riches, divine titles and distinctions; and gives real, present, and satisfactory good to the soul.

II. *A Sound Mind avoids Credulity and so does Religion.*

The credulous believe without, or on imperfect, evidence. Take all for what it is represented to be. Religion is based on full and satisfactory evidence. Evidence arising from fulfilment of prophecy. Miracles. Moral evidence. The excellency, purity, and holy influence it exerts over the heart, and tongue, and life. A religion that has been sifted, and tried, and tested by thousands of malignant foes; and by thousands of candid, sincere, and honest men. A religion that invites to scrutiny and close investigation.

III. *A Sound Mind is opposed to Superstition; so is Religion.*

A superstitious person sees every object through a dark medium. All is tinged with the distorted peculiarities of his own benighted mind. Services, and ceremonies, and rites are magnified so as to hold the mind in a state of slavish awe and tormenting dread. Now, the religion of Christ is a religion of principles, and not of mere vagaries. It is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. It is light in the mind—love in the heart—and obedience in the life.

IV. *A Sound Mind is the opposite of Fanaticism; so is Religion.*

A fanatic is one who is in an overheated state of mind; the sport of unregulated passions; a devotee at the shrine of mystery; a believer in visions; and one who conceives that his standard of doctrines and services is the only one of unerring accuracy. Religion is calm, and serenely bright; she is directed by the truth; stands firm on the rock of revelation; proves all things; and abides by that which is lovely, and amiable, and of good report; is humble, and meek, and full of charity.

V. *A Sound Mind is opposed to Skepticism; so is Religion.*

A skeptic is one who is never satisfied with evidence; and remains unbelieving, though surrounded by the light of clear and palpable truth. A Christian tries what is revealed, and buys the truth, and having bought, delights in it, abides by it, and sells it not. The infidel displays the unsoundness of his mind to a glaring degree

when he professes to believe that the world is the result of accident, or self-created—that it governs, and regulates, and preserves itself—that man is a mere refined brute—the soul, a chimera—Christ, an impostor—religion, a fable—and eternity, a mere dream. The Christian appeals to the word of God; and on all these subjects takes it as his sure and unerring guide.

VI. *A Sound Mind is opposed to Insensibility and Indifference; so is Religion.*

It cannot be wise to be careless of our present happiness, and indifferent to our well-being. Recklessness, in all cases, is folly and madness. Religion secures present safety and enjoyment; and aspires after a state of perfect felicity in another world. The soul and its salvation—heaven and its glories—and eternity and its realities, are all and in all.

Urge true and vital religion upon all. Urge it, especially, upon the child of vanity—the credulous—the superstitious—the fanatical—the skeptical—and the careless.

SKELETON LXXXV.

ISRAEL EXHORTED TO RETURN TO GOD.

"O Israel, return unto the Lord thy God; for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity. Take with you words, and turn to the Lord: say unto him, Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously: so will we render the calves of our lips."—*Hosea* xiv. 1, 2.

In the text we have two things; I. A solemn Declaration. And, II. An affectionate Exhortation.

Notice,

I. *The solemn Declaration.*

"O Israel, thou hast fallen by thine iniquity."

This declaration is universally applicable to all men, as well as to Israel of old. Observe,

1. Man is fallen.

Fallen from the divine likeness—from the divine family—from the divine favor. Temple in ruins; glory departed. Naturally without God, and without hope, in the world. Totally fallen. The whole soul degraded, wretched, and vile. Observe, we are,

2. Fallen by iniquity.

Obedience united man to God. Iniquity broke the link—dissolved the connection—brought misery and disease into the soul, and death and wo into the world. The root of human nature became corrupt, hence all the branches are corrupt too. Fountain became polluted; hence all the streams are filthy. Parents were diseased, and have entailed disease and misery upon all their posterity. Rom. iii. 10; v. 12; Matt. vii. 17; Psal. li. 5. Observe,

3. Man is fallen by his own iniquity.

"Thine own." We are fallen in Adam; but we are also fallen personally, and practically. We have "all sinned," &c. "All gone astray," &c. We have sinned often; sinned in heart, and with lip, and in life. We have sinned against both tables of the law; and against all the grace of the gospel. Now, this fallen estate is one of dishonor, of wretchedness, and of imminent peril: "Wages of sin, death."

Notice,

II. *The affectionate Exhortation.*

"O Israel, return unto the Lord thy God."

1. We must return.

Not go onwards in our course of sin any longer. Retrace our steps. Arise, as the prodigal did, and return to our Father's house.

2. We must return to God.

The Being we have offended, rejected, despised; the Being who might justly destroy us; yet, the Being who still calls himself, "our God." He only can pardon, accept, and bless us. "To whom shall we go," &c.

3. We must take with us words.

(1) Words of contrite confession. Prodigal. Publican. "If we confess our sins," &c. "Whoso confesseth," &c.

(2) Words of earnest supplication "Take away all our iniquity." Iniquity has ruined us. We are only saved, when it is taken away. Guilt taken away; defilement taken away; dominion taken away; love of it taken away; all of it taken away; that our souls may be washed, justified, and sanctified by the word, and Spirit, and blood of Christ.

(3) Words of holy pleading. "Receive us graciously." Receive us into thy favor, service, and family, "graciously;" that is, gratuitously, of thy free mercy; as we have no merit to give. "Graciously;" that is, according to the rules of thy grace by Christ Jesus. We cannot be received on the ground of innocence, for we are guilty; on the ground of merit, for we are

altogether polluted and vile; on the ground of price, for we are insolvent debtors, and have nothing to pay: so, if we are received, it must be of grace, not of works, &c.; Eph. ii. 8.

(4) Words of self-dedication. "So will we render the calves of our lips." "Our lips shall praise and celebrate thy forgiving grace;" Psal. xl. 1, 2. Our lips shall hold holy converse with thee. Our lips shall speak of thee, and for thee, before men. Our lips, in concert with our hearts, and in connection with our lives, shall be thine forever.

APPLICATION.

1. Sinners, learn your true condition. Stop! Reflect! Consider your ways, and be wise! 2. Return unto God. Do not continue to grieve his love—to insult his goodness—and to despise his grace. 3. Return now; while you are invited; while God's gracious sceptre is extended to you: before sin involve you in eternal and irreparable ruin. 4. Return in God's appointed way. It is suited to your state; the only way by which you can come to him; and the way wherein you shall assuredly find pardon, and peace, and eternal life.

SKELETON LXXXVI

INTIMACY WITH CHRIST, AND ITS EFFECTS

"And they took knowledge of them that they had been with Jesus."—*Acts* iv. 13

PETER and John, at the hour of prayer, went up to the temple; saw a lame man, and in the name of Jesus imparted unto him healing. The attention of the people excited. Peter's sermon. Five thousand converted. The priests incensed. Peter and John placed in charge. The next day brought forth for examination. Peter's faithful and searching address, ver. 8. The astonishment produced. Then the declaration of the text, "They took knowledge," &c.

I. *It is the Privilege of Believers to be with Jesus*

What does this imply?

1. A scriptural knowledge of Christ.

That we have experimentally become acquainted with him. That we know him in his person, in his offices, in his merits, and in his grace. That we know him really, personally, savingly. "This is life eternal," &c. 1 John v. 19, 20.

2. Intimate friendship with Christ.

That we are of one spirit with Christ. That we love him, and rejoice in him. The beloved is ours, and we are his. That he is precious to us. Our beloved and friend, in whom our souls delight.

3. Regular intercourse with him.

By prayer. By praise. By meditation. Intercourse with him in his word, which testifies of him, and reveals him fully to our souls—in his gospel, of which he is the light, and sun, and glory—in his ordinances, where he meets, and banquets, and blesses his people. In short, Christ is ever with his people; he is in their dwelling as their abiding friend; and in their hearts, the hope of eternal glory. They are with Jesus, as *pupils*, to learn the lessons of his grace. As his *sheep*, for whom he died, and whom he preserves and protects, and leads into green pastures. They are with him as his *soldiers*, whom, as the captain of their salvation, he is bringing into eternal glory. Observe,

II. *Intercourse with Jesus will be manifest.*

Certain effects will be the result. Certain evidences will be given. There will be two sorts of evidence which will arise from intercourse with Christ.

1. Internal; and this will be manifest only to ourselves.

Being with Jesus will produce,

(1) Abundant peace. Our peace will abound. Will flow as a river. He speaks peace to his people.

(2) Increasing confidence in him. His presence will strengthen our faith, and brighten our hope.

(3) Ardent love. By increasing intimacy we shall know more of him—admire him more—love him more.

(4) Enlarged joy. Then were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord. Rejoice with joy unspeakable. And long to be with him forever.

2. The evidences of intercourse with Jesus will be external, and therefore manifest to others

"They took knowledge of them that they had been with Jesus." Others will see that we have had intercourse with Christ.

(1) By our deadness to the world. We shall be crucified to the world. Not of the world, as Christ was not of the world.

(2) By our spirituality of mind. We shall participate of his Spirit. Be like-minded with Christ.

(3) By our humility of spirit. Isaiah's vision of Christ caused him to exclaim, "Wo is me," &c. Isai. vi. 5.

(4) By our love to his saints and compassion to the world. He is love; if we dwell with and in him, we shall dwell in love. "By this shall all men know," &c.

(5) Zeal and courage in his service. We shall not be ashamed to testify of him before the world. We shall be decided, firm. "Filled with holy boldness," &c. The apostles in the text.

APPLICATION.

Urge upon believers constant communion with Christ. Guard against hinderances. Be watchful, prayerful, and contemplative. Invite inquirers to come to the mercy-seat, especially now he has declared, "That those who come unto him, he will in no-wise cast out."

SKELETON LXXXVII.

THE EXPERIMENTAL RETROSPECT.

"Hearken to me, ye that follow after righteousness, ye that seek the Lord: look unto the rock whence ye are hewn, and to the hole of the pit whence ye are digged."—*Isai.* li. 1.

THE text was addressed to Israel, and was intended to remind them of their original small and weak condition, when God called Abraham, and blessed him, and increased him. The passage will equally apply to the spiritual Israel, and may be considered a subject worthy of retrospect, and which is calculated both to instruct and profit them.

There are two parts in the text. I. The Characters addressed, and, II. The Duties enjoined.

I. *The Characters addressed.*

"Ye that follow after righteousness, that seek the Lord."

1. Followers of righteousness.

That is,

(1) Righteousness of character. Which is obtained in justification.—Rom. iv 24

(2) Righteousness of nature Which we receive in regeneration.—1 John iii. 9

(3) Righteousness of practice. Which is displayed in the acts and exercises of an obedient life.—1 John iii. 7. Those who have been justified and regenerated, follow after righteousness—prayerfully, diligently, and progressively.

2. They that seek the Lord.

This is sometimes put for he commencement of religion, and sometimes for the sum of it. The latter sense is the meaning of the text. Their desires are after God. His face and favor they constantly prize and seek.

(1) They seek the blessing of God in prayer.

(2) The presence of God in ordinances.

(3) The smile of God in duties.

(4) The aid of God in difficulties.

(5) The approbation of God in all things Notice,

II. *The Duties enjoined.*

"Hearken unto me: look unto the rock whence ye are hewn," &c. Observe, the duties enjoined are,—

1. Attention.

"Hearken unto me." God is our *Sovereign*, and he claims our subjection and attention; we are to hearken to all his laws and precepts. He is our *Redeemer*; and we are to hearken to all the statements of his grace and mercy. He is our *Friend;* and we are to hearken to all his advice and counsel. We are to hearken to him as he addresses us through his works—through his providences—through his word—through his servants—especially through his *Son* and Spirit. We are to hearken to him on all subjects and at all times. We are to hearken to him humbly, affectionately, cheerfully.

2. Retrospection.

"Look to the rock whence ye are hewn, and to the hole of the pit whence ye are digged." Observe,

(1) Our original state. A part of the common "rock" of depravity. Hard—cold—inflexible. In the "hole of the pit" See Psalm xl. 1. Pit of depravity and defilement—pit of misery—pit of imminent peril—pit of utter human helplessness.

(2) Our present state. Hewn from the rock. Digged out of the pit. God saw, and pitied, and saved us. By his word and Spirit he made us soft and tender; and he exalted us, justified, renewed,

washed, and sanctified us. How great, how total, how blessed the change!

(3) Our present duty is to "look unto the rock," &c. We should look, and be humble—look, and be grateful—look, and be obedient—look, and labor to be useful to others—look, and be watchful, that we are not again entangled in that yoke of bondage.

APPLICATION

Learn, The sinfulness, misery, and danger of mankind by nature. The goodness of God, and the efficiency of his grace. The grateful remembrance of his mercy which his people should cultivate.

SKELETON LXXXVIII.

CHRIST'S UNCHANGING LOVE TO HIS PEOPLE.

"Having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end."—*John* xiii. 1.

We have in the text, I. A peculiar Description of believers—Christ's own. II. Their present Condition—"In the world." III. Christ's unalterable Attachment to them—"Having loved them, he loved them to the end."

We have,

I. *A peculiar Description of Believers.*

They are Christ's own. No doubt this referred originally to the disciples of Jesus; but it is equally applicable to all who shall believe upon him to the end of the world. Believers are Christ's own.

1. They are his own by purchase.

"Redeemed by his blood." "Bought with a price." "He loved them, and gave himself for them."

2. They are his own by gift.

They are given to him by his heavenly Father. As his seed—his reward—the travail of his soul, &c. John vi. 37–40; x. 29.

3. They are his own by a cheerful and entire consecration of themselves to his service.

Given themselves to the Lord. Left all and followed him. Yielded themselves to his service. "This God shall be our God forever," &c.

4. They are Christ's own, as they bear his image, and manifest his Spirit.

Christ dwells in them by his Spirit, and they are changed into his image, &c. Same mind in them that was in Christ. He is their example, and they tread in his steps.

II. *Their present Condition.*

"In the world." Not of the world. Brought out of it. Saved from it. Crucified to it. But they are in it. As strangers and pilgrims on their way to another and a better world. They are in the world,

1. For their own sake.

To be instructed, and that they may grow in grace, in knowledge, and in holiness, and be thus made meet for the celestial inheritance. Here they have to labor, wrestle, and run the race set before them.

2. For Christ's sake.

To profess him. To testify of him. To be his witnesses. His living epistles His avowed friends.

3. For the world's sake.

They are the pillars of the world. The lights of the world. The salt of the earth. They are blessings to it, by their example, by their counsels, and by their prayers. Sodom would have remained to this day, had ten righteous persons been found in it. Jerusalem was not destroyed, until Christ's disciples fled out of it. Notice,

III. *Christ's unalterable Attachment to them.*

"Having loved them, he loved them to the end."

1. Christ loved them when he freely gave himself a ransom for their souls.

"Herein is love," &c. "Greater love hath no man," &c. "Unto him who loved us," &c.

2. Christ loves them as his believing disciples.

He loves them with complacency and delight. His heart is set upon them. His words—his smiles—his communications to them, are all evidences of his love. They are his flock, his jewels, &c. John xv. 9. He pities them. Bears with them. Keeps them. Blesses them. Saves them, &c.

3. Christ loves them unchangeably.

'Unto the end." In life—health—sickness—death—and forever and ever. His love is ardent—abiding—increasing—inconceivable, and everlasting. Eph. iii 19; Jer. xxxi. 3.

How *distinguished* the character, how *responsible* the station, and how *happy* the privilege of the people of God!

SKELETON LXXXIX.

NAHUM'S DESCRIPTION OF JEHOVAH.

"The Lord is good, a strong-hold in the day of trouble, and he knoweth them that trust in him."—*Nahum* i. 7

In this description, God is placed before us in a three-fold form. 1. He is good. 2. A strong-hold. And, 3. He knoweth them that trust in him.

I. *The Lord is good.*

By goodness is principally meant, the benevolence of God. Now this is rather he essential character of God, than any abstract or distinct perfection. God is infinitely good—God is immutably good—and he is universally good. His general goodness extends to all his creatures and works. His special goodness relates more particularly to man. And his peculiar goodness and delight is yet more properly limited to his children, to all those who love and fear him. All creation reflects his goodness. All the acts of his providence exhibit his goodness. And in the great plan of redemption, goodness is revealed in all its boundlessness, munificence, and glory. Believers enjoy his goodness in all their blessings, privileges, and immunities, promises and ordinances. In their justification—regeneration—adoption—sanctification—preservation; Exod. xxxiii. 19; xxxiv. 6, 7; Matt. xix. 17; Ps. cxliv. 12–15; lxxiii. 25; xxxvi. 6; James i. 13, 14.

II. *He is a Strong-hold in the Day of Trouble*

That is, a place of refuge, retreat, or defence.

1. He is a strong-hold or defence.

And as such, he is *impregnable*, *immutable*, and always *near* at hand. He has been his people's strong-hold in every age and country of the world. And he is a strong-hold at all times, but more especially,

2. In the day of trouble.

In the day of *national* trouble, to Israel of old. In the day of *domestic* trouble—Jacob, Job, David, &c. In the day of *personal* trouble; when *tempted*, *tried*, *afflicted*, *persecuted*, *dying*.

III. *He knoweth them that trust in him.*

That is, those who avail themselves of him as a strong-hold, by fleeing to him in the day of trouble Many in the day of trouble trust in themselves, in their richest wisdom, might, &c. Many trust in their fellow-men, in an arm of flesh. These are all insufficient, all refuges of lies and will fail in the hour of extremity. God knoweth them who trust in him. He knoweth them,

(1) So as to distinguish them from others He knows them,

(2) So as to approve of them. He knows them,

(3) So as to deliver and save them. He knows them,

(4) So as to bless and reward them. Those who trust in him shall be guided in perplexity, sustained in weakness, delivered in time of danger; and when flesh and heart fail, God will be the strength of their heart, their exceeding great reward, and portion forever. Ps. lxxxiv. 11, xlv. 9; v. 12; Prov. xxx. 5; Zech. ix. 12; Ps. xlvi. 1; cxliv. 2; Isai. xii. 2; l. 10

APPLICATION.

Let all believers rejoice in their God and shield. There is no rock like unto their rock. Their help and defence is in the name of the Lord. The goodness of God is their portion. The Almighty power of God their defence, and the omniscient eye of God, which never slumbers nor sleeps, is ever upon them for good. "For he knoweth them that trust in him."

SKELETON XC

COVETOUSNESS.

"Take heed, and beware of covetousness."—*Luke* xii. 15.

Let us consider, 1. The Nature and General Causes of Covetousness. 2 Its Evil and Pernicious Effects. And, 3. Its Prevention and Cure.

I. *The Nature and General Causes of Covetousness.*

It does not consist in a lawful care about the things of this life, or in a proper regard to the principles of prudence and frugality. But it consists,

1. In too eager a desire after the things of this life.

Setting our hearts upon them. Loving them. Making anxious efforts for them. Giving them our chief desires &c It may be known

2. By the tenacity with which we hold ne things of this life.

Treating them as our chief good. Making great sacrifices to retain them. Hoarding them up. Feeling extreme regret at losing them.

The general causes of covetousness are principally these:

1. A corrupt and perverted state of nd.

A false estimate of the true value of things. Living entirely by sense.

2. Discontent with, and distrust of, the providence of God.

Afraid of trusting God. A desire to have within ourselves wherewith to confide and wherewith to look for support, &c.

3. Forgetfulness of the soul, and those things which are eternal.

The body and its wants engross all the time, and absorb all the thoughts. Death kept out of sight—grave out of sight—judgment out of sight—eternity out of sight.

II. *Its Evil and Pernicious Effects.*

Consider,

1. Its effects personally.

It is the source of many vices. "They who will be rich," &c. 1 Tim. vi. 9. It tempts men to base and unjust means to get money. It hardens the heart, blunts the feelings, and renders the soul callous and sordid. It fills the mind with distraction, and prevents all true and solid enjoyment. It keeps out Christ and salvation. It is the thorns which choke the seed, &c. It is the whirlpool of ruin. Few abandon it; and if not rooted out, it must inevitably terminate in the eternal loss of the soul.

Consider,

2. Its effects on society.

To society we are deeply obligated; and we are bound to live for others as well as ourselves. We are bound to be equitable and just, to be good and beneficent, to be pitiful and merciful to all men. But covetousness is injustice and cruelty; it robs society; it especially robs the poor, the widow, and the orphan; a covetous man is a misanthrope to his species. The foulest crimes of darkness and blood which have been committed in our world, have been the offspring of this hateful lust.

3. Its effects in reference to God.

It is disobedience. It is unbelief. Prostitution and perversion of his rights. It is idolatry.

4. Its effects as exhibited in the examples revelation furnishes.

Crime of our first parents was covetousness, which brought universal desolation and wo into our world. Cain coveted Abel's blessing, and murdered him. The general corruption of the old world originated in the sons of Seth *coveting* the daughters of men. This brought misery upon Lot and his family, and ruined his wife Caused Achan to be stoned to death. Made Gehazi leprous to his death. Induced Judas to commit that foul deed, the betrayal of his Redeemer. Brought instant death upon Ananias and Sapphira; and caused Demas to forsake the truth, and make shipwreck of faith and a good conscience. In short, the principal wars and desolating scenes with which our world has been afflicted, have had their origin in this vice. And, in fact, hell itself originated in it, being prepared for the devil and his angels, who coveted a higher degree of power and glory than that which they possessed. And it is highly probable that its endless fires receive most of their fuel from what this vice supplies.

Let us then notice the means necessary,

III. *For its Prevention and Cure.*

1. Serious consideration of the shortness and uncertainty of life

How mad-like, inordinately to love what must so shortly be taken from us!

2. A reflection on our responsibility to God for all we possess.

Stewards. Day of reckoning will arrive. God will judge us. All give an account, and receive according as our works shall be.

3. A renewal of our hearts by the grace and Spirit of God.

"We must be born again." Old man with its lusts must be crucified. Heart made new, &c.

4. Imitation of Christ's blessed example

Here all the happy and glowing graces of goodness and mercy are exhibited. We must possess the mind that was in Christ.

5. Repeated and prayerful examination of our hearts before God.

"Take heed" that it does not insidiously lurk within. "Beware" of those things which lead to it. Watch and pray, and also seek earnestly, supremely, and constantly, those things which are above.

SKELETON XCI.

THE VARIOUS COMMUNICATIONS OF THE DIVINE MIND TO MAN

"God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in times past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son." —*Heb.* i. 1, 2.

INTRODUCTION—Author of the epistle—Persons to whom it was addressed—Its general scope and design—Contains a most full and comprehensive exhibition of the person, offices, and work of the Saviour.

In the text two things, 1. The Revelation God gave to Man before Christ appeared. And, 2 The Revelation which he gave by Christ.

I. *The Revelation which God gave to Man before Christ appeared.*

"At sundry times and in divers manners, God spake in times past unto the fathers by the prophets." God revealed his mind,

1. At sundry times.

He did so to Adam when in innocency. After the fall; Gen. iii. 9, &c. To Cain; Gen. iv. 9. To Enoch; Jude 14. To Noah; Gen. vi. 8–22. To Abraham and the patriarchs; Gen. xii. 1, &c.; xxviii. 10-22. To Moses; Exod. iii. 1–22. To Samuel, to David, and to all the prophets down to Malachi. To John the Baptist; Matt. iii. 1, &c. God revealed himself,

2. In a variety of ways.

"In divers manners." He sometimes appeared and spake with an audible voice; as to Adam, Cain, Abraham, Moses, Isaiah, &c. He sometimes spake by angels; he did so to Lot, to Daniel, x. 10, &c.; to Zechariah, to Philip, to Peter, &c. He sometimes spake by signs and symbols, when he caused fire to descend and consume the sacrifices, and when he filled the temple with the cloud of his glorious presence; 1 Chron. xxi. 26; 2 Chron. vii. 1, 2. God most frequently revealed himself,

3. By the prophets.

Men inspired to reveal his will, and who sometimes received express revelations to deliver to the people, Isai. xxxviii. 4; Dan. ii. 19; 2 Tim. iii. 16. They wrote their prophecies, &c. as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.

Notice,

II. *Teh Revelation which God hath given to us by Christ.*

"Hath in these last days spoken to us by his Son" Let us consider in reference to this revelation,

1. The time specified.

"These last days." The various dispensations God has given to the world are here likened to days. The first of which was from Adam to Noah; the second, from Noah to Abraham; the third, from Abraham to Moses; the fourth, from Moses to David, or perhaps to the return from the captivity; the fifth, to the personal appearance of Christ; the sixth or last days, from Christ's incarnation to the period when he shall appear the second time to introduce the day of sabbatical rest and millennial glory.

2. The person by whom this revelation was made.

"His own Son." Not as of old, when he revealed himself by prophets or by angels, but now, by his uncreated fellow, his equal in greatness, power, and authority. His essential, only-begotten, and well-beloved Son, the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person.

3. The revelation itself.

"Hath in these last days *spoken* unto us by his Son." And the revelation made by Christ included all things necessary to salvation. All that was necessary concerning the true God—concerning man—concerning the soul—concerning the resurrection of the body—concerning eternal life, and the only way of obtaining it. Now the revelation given by Christ was superior to that given to the fathers by the prophets, inasmuch as he possessed qualifications infinitely superior to them. Unbounded wisdom and knowledge; the Holy Ghost without measure Could reveal God's mind on all subjects and at all times. His revelations were more *clear*, more *full*, more *gracious*. His revelations were intended for the whole world, and for every man His revelations, in connection with what the Holy Spirit taught the apostles, have perfected and concluded the inspired canon, and now none can add or diminish except at the peril of the Divine displeasure How grateful we should be for it—how we should study it—feel interested in it—believe it—and obey it! How fearful the doom of those who reject it!

SKELETON XCII.

DEATH OF CHRIST.

"It is Christ that died."—*Rom.* viii. 34.

Let us consider a few things in connection with the important event specified in the text. "It is Christ that died."

I. *Christ died, not in an ordinary, but in an extraordinary manner.*

All the circumstances connected with it were of a striking and wonderful description. The place and the mode of his death; phenomena which attended it—earthquake, opening graves, veil rent, sun darkened, &c.; Matt. xxviii. 45–54.

II. *Christ died by the Appointment of the Father.*

God purposed to send his Son. Hence in due time he fulfilled that purpose. "Did not spare his Son, but delivered him," &c. The Father gave him the cup to drink. The Father caused the sword to awake, &c. Zech. xiii. 7; Acts ii. 23. "God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son," &c. John iii. 14–17.

III. *Christ died through the Malignity of the Jewish Rulers.*

With wicked hands they crucified and put him to death. Acts ii. 23. They envied him, hated him, and sought for false witnesses to appear against him. Paid his betrayer. Charged him with blasphemy. Refused his release. Cried, Crucify him, crucify him. Took his blood upon themselves Matt. xxvii. 25.

IV. *Christ died by his own free and voluntary Consent.*

Though given by the Father, yet he also freely gave himself. He was not a reluctant but willing sacrifice. "Who gave himself for our sins." "Who loved me, and gave himself for me." Gal. i. 4; ii. 20; 1 Tim. ii. 6. He left heaven for this express purpose. He ever kept this event before his eyes. He ever longed for its arrival. "I have a baptism to be baptized with," &c. Luke xii. 50. "He cried with a loud voice, and *gave* up the ghost." John xix. 30; Rev. i. 5.

V. *Christ died as the End of Sacrifices, and fulfilled the Predictions of the Old Testament Scriptures.*

He was the last great Sacrifice, of which all the others were but as types and shadows. All referred to him and all terminated with him. Heb. ix. 19–28 From Moses to Malachi, the prophets testified of the sufferings and glory of Christ. His sufferings and death had been prominently exhibited, by David, by Isaiah, by Daniel, by Zechariah, &c. The time had been predicted. The traitor—the mode, &c., &c., had been minutely detailed. 1 Pet. i 10, 11.

VI. *Christ died as the Substitute for Sinners.*

He did not die merely as one possessing our nature. He did not die merely as a martyr for the truth, or as an example for his people's imitation. But he died, that he might "redeem us to God by his blood." He died in our room and stead. He "bare our iniquities in his own body on the tree." "Suffered, the just for the unjust," &c. The sinner's blood or life was forfeited; without shedding of blood there could be no remission; therefore Christ shed his own blood, and was the true sacrifice and propitiation for the sins of the world. 1 Tim. ii. 5, 6; Heb. ii. 9; Isai. liii. 4–6; Rom. iv. 25; v. 6–11.

APPLICATION.

Learn, 1. The true and only foundation of the sinner's hope. Sin may be pardoned through the sacrifice, and in the name, of Christ. God may now be the just God, and yet the Saviour and the Justifier of all who believe. Luke xxiv. 46, 47; Acts xiii. 38, 39. Faith in Christ's death essential to salvation. 2. The only way by which we have access to God. Heb. x. 19. 3. The true object of the believer's trust and glorying. "God forbid," &c. Gal. vi 14

SKELETON XCIII.

THE PLEASANTNESS OF RELIGION

"Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace."—*Prov.* iii. 17

A very common error greatly prevails as to the influence which religion produces on the minds of its possessors. It is generally considered to tend to gloom and melancholy. Nothing more incorrect. Religion is the only source of light, and joy and peace. "Her ways," &c. Let us endeavor, 1. To establish and illustrate the Truth of the Text. And, 2. Show the distinguishing Characteristics of that Pleasure which Religion affords. Let us,

I. *Establish and illustrate the Truth of he Text.*

It may be necessary premise that it is not the name or profession of religion, but the true personal enjoyment of it, which yields the pleasures referred to in the text.

1. The intellectual part of religion is a way of pleasantness.

Knowledge is happiness as well as power. Religious knowledge the most blessed, glorious, and sublime. To know the true God, and Jesus Christ, whom he hath sent. To know his will—his heavenly doctrines—the truths which relate to the soul and to eternal life. "Yea, doubtless,' &c. Soul to be without knowledge is not good. Ignorance, source of fear and wretchedness.

2. The experimental part of religion is a way of pleasantness.

This is very fully described by the apostle as consisting of "righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." Rom. xiv. 17. To be righteous in state, and without charge of guilt, must yield true pleasure. To have internal peace with God, and towards man, and also peace of conscience. Internal serenity and composure. As religion consists of righteousness and peace, so it includes also joy in the Holy Ghost. Exultation of feeling. Ecstatic delight. The Christian is called to be joyful, has every reason to be so. Source of joy, the blessed God dwells within him. When he contrasts his present with his former state. Then poor, wretched, diseased, lost. Now rich, happy, whole, and saved. Then observe,

3. The graces of religion are pleasant.

Make a selection of a few of them. Faith; to have implicit confidence in God, and firm reliance and trust in Jesus Christ. Hope; to be desiring and expecting, on good grounds, the possession of eternal glory Love; to love the greatest and best of beings, and to have his love shed abroad in our hearts.

4. The ordinances of religion are pleasant.

To hold communion with God in private, in the closet—to surround the family altar with our children—to meet in the sanctuary—to read the precious word of life—to tell all our mind to God—to celebrate his praises—to enjoy his presence, and to behold his glory. "How amiable," &c.

"Lord, how delightful 'tis to see," &c.

Heaven on earth.

5. The duties of religion are pleasant.

Services are unpleasant when they are degrading in themselves—when they are performed to a worthless master—or when they do not yield a sufficient recompense. But the Christian services are truly ennobling, they are performed to him whom angels delight to worship, and they are rewarded with the present riches of grace, and the eternal riches of glory. "In keeping his commandments there is great reward." "His commandments are not grievous." Let us notice,

II. *The distinguishing Characteristics of that Pleasure which Religion affords.*

1. It is real, and not imaginary.

Pleasures of sin are deceitful, visionary. As painted fire to the man starving with cold. As a picture of a banquet to the hungry perishing. A dream, &c. Religious pleasures are solid. They are what they appear to be.

2. It is constant and abiding.

Not a momentary gleam. Not a glaring meteor. But the light of day. Settled and abiding. Other pleasures go, when riches fail, when health fails, when friends die, when death arrives. This makes happy at all times, and under all circumstances.

3. It is progressive and increasing.

Path shines more and more. Other pleasures cloy, and require perpetual change; these are ever fresh and delicious, and impart increasing joy and delight to the mind

4. It is adapted to every human being.

Suited to the capacities of every soul, and the desires and feelings of every heart. Religion yields true enjoyment to the learned and the ignorant, rich and poor, old and young, &c. Religious pleasure

5. Will end in the fulness of bliss at God's right hand forever.

Ps. xvi. 11; Rev. xxi. 22–27; xxii. 1–5. Then let us urge these ways upon the attention of every description of character Let them be tested, that men may know for themselves that "her ways," &c

SKELETON XCIV.

THE SOLEMN REQUISITION.

"Prepare to meet thy God."—*Amos* iv 12.

INTRODUCTION.—Men live without God—throw off his fear—set at naught his au

thority—do not observe his works, nor mark his judgments—live and act as if there were no God. This exceedingly foolish—a sign of infatuation—must produce dreadful consequences.

Let us consider the text in the light of a friendly warning and admonition.

I. *A certain and inevitable Interview must take place between God and every Man.*

Notice,

1. He often meets men by signal instances of his providential visitations.

Gehazi; Uzziah; Nebuchadnezzar; Herod, &c.

2. He will assuredly meet you in death.

Death is God's officer. Cannot be evaded, bribed, or resisted. Here he has met all men from the beginning of time, in a great variety of forms and circumstances. Pharaoh, with his chariots, &c. Belshazzar, at the banquet, &c.

3. He will also certainly meet you in judgment.

"After death, the judgment." "Every eye shall see him." Every human being be there. Not one shall be wanting. All be judged, and receive according as their works shall be. How great this meeting! How solemn! How momentous! Observe

II. *To render these Meetings safe, Preparation is indispensable.*

1. The preparation of true repentance.

Consideration, conviction, contrition, confession, change of mind, change of life; Luke xiii. 3; Acts iii. 19; xvii. 30.

2. The preparation of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Christ the only refuge from the wrath to come. No pardon, or peace, or acceptance, but by and through faith in his blood. "He that believeth shall be saved," &c.; Mark xvi. 15, 16.

3. The preparation of holiness is necessary

Soul must be "born again." "Created anew unto good works." "All old things must pass away, and all things become new." John iii. 5; 1 Pet. i. 15; Heb. xii. 14.

4. Diligent and persevering obedience to God is necessary.

"Be diligent," &c. "Be thou faithful," &c. Matt. xxv. 23; x. 22; 1 Cor. xv. 58.

Then let us,

III. *Urge the Subject upon the Attention of all Men*

1. God addresses all men.

Of all ranks and degrees of mankind He speaks to all and to each of the vast family of man. Prov. i. 20.

2. All men are deeply concerned in it.

His accountable creatures. Must appear, &c. None too high; nor yet are any too low. Then,

3. Let all men obey the solemn summons.

Immediately—earnestly. For, behold, death is at hand! the Judge is at the door! eternity is near! Then, "prepare to meet thy God." The disobedient and impenitent cannot escape; but will be destroyed by the brightness of his appearing.

SKELETON XCV.

THE SAINT'S REMEDY IN TROUBLE.

"Call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me."—*Psal.* l. 15

OBSERVE,

I. *The Season referred to.*

"The day of trouble."

Man is liable to trouble; believers, as well as other men. They have their peculiar troubles. Called to suffer, as the witnesses, disciples, and friends of Christ.

1. There is the day of bodily trouble.

"Wearisome nights appointed unto them," &c.; Job vii. 3; Psal. lxxvii. 1–4.

2. There is the day of spiritual trouble.

Mind dark, and without comfort. Perplexed, &c. "Behold, I go backward, and he is not there," &c.; Job xxiii. 3–10 Persecution, temptation, &c. &c.

3. There is the day of family trouble.

Jacob. Eli. Job, bereaved of his sons and daughters; Job i. 18, &c. David, fleeing before Absalom, &c. Notice,

II. *The Remedy provided.*

"Call upon me," &c. Observe,

1. The object of our address.

God. Not to contend with trouble in our own wisdom, and strength, and self-sufficiency; but to go to God. Not to sink down, and allow them to overwhelm us Not to trust in an arm of flesh. God is his people's refuge, and help, &c.; fortress, strong tower, &c. Notice,

2. The mode of address specified.

We must "call upon him;" make known our requests; seek his gracious aid; supplicate his immediate help. We must de

his humbly, earnestly, in faith, and with perseverance, 2 Cor. xii. 7–9. Notice,

3. The time of our address is also stated.

We must call upon him "in the day of trouble." Not delay. God is ever near; and never afar off. Day of trouble is the time when we need help; lest we be destroyed by our adversaries. God a present help, &c. Observe,

III. *The Deliverance promised.*

"I will deliver thee."

1. God can deliver us.

Wisdom and ability sufficient Nothing too hard for the Lord. "Who can harm us?" &c. "If God be for us," &c. "Greater is he that is for us," &c.

2. God has always delivered his people.

Abraham. Jacob. Job. Children of Israel from Egypt, and their enemies in the wilderness. David. Daniel. Three Hebrews, &c. He never failed to plead his people's cause. Psal. cv.; cvii.; cxviii. 5, 13.

3. God will deliver us

He desires to do it. He loves to do it. He is pledged to do it. He is bound by his word by his faithfulness, and by his covenant, to do it. But it must be in his own way—by his own means—and at his own time.

IV. *The Return demanded.*

"And thou shalt glorify me."

1. By celebrating his delivering goodness.

Song of Deborah. Many of the Psalms, &c. Pillar, Ebenezer.

2. By implicitly trusting him at all times.

God is greatly honored, when his people confide in him.

3. By a renewed consecration of ourselves to his service.

Love increased—zeal inflamed—heart more devoted—body, soul and spirit given entirely to his service—all things done to his glory.

SKELETON XCVI

FORGIVENESS WITH GOD

"There is forgiveness with thee."—*Psal.* cxxx. 4.

I. *Man stands in Need of Forgiveness.*

He is guilty; without plea; without the means of reparation or satisfaction. This is true of all men. "All have sinned," &c. All are condemned; and without forgiveness, all must perish.

II. *God only can forgive.*

He is our lawgiver. His authority we have contemned. Rebels to him. Enemies to him. None can dispense life or death but himself. Human forgiveness would avail nothing. "Who can forgive sins, but God only?" Mark ii. 7. "There is forgiveness with thee;" Micah vii. 18.

III. *God has made Provision for the Forgiveness of Sin.*

By the appointment of his only Son, as a sacrifice for sin. Punished sin to the utmost, in the person of the surety. Laid our sins upon him; Isai. liii. 6. He bare them; and died that we might have a full remission of them; Acts v. 31; xiii. 38; Eph. i. 7; Luke xxiv. 47.

IV. *God has revealed the only Way of Forgiveness.*

By repentance towards himself, and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Acts iii. 19–21; x. 43; Rom. ii. 26; x. 8–13; Isai. lv. 7.

V. *God Desires and is ever Ready to Forgive.*

Hence he exhorts, invites, expostulates, forbears; and it is only when forgiving love is totally and finally rejected, that he executes his displeasure upon the ungodly. He is ready to forgive sin, however deep the stains—however enormous—however aggravated—however long-continued. He is ready to forgive all sin, and every sinner. Col. ii. 13; Eph. ii. 3–19. Manasseh. Publican. Dying thief. Jerusalem sinners. Saul of Tarsus. Corinthians, &c See Matt. xii. 31.

VI. *There is Forgiveness with God now.*

He is now ready to forgive. "Behold, now is the accepted time," &c. How desirable and important, that we should rightly estimate, and fervently seek, his forgiveness, before sin proves our ruin. "Kiss the Son," &c. "Agree with thine adversary quickly," &c

SKELETON XCVII

GOD'S ADDRESS TO THE PRISONERS OF HOPE.

"As for thee also, by the blood of thy covenant I have sent forth thy prisoners out of the pit wherein is no water. Turn you to the strong-hold, ye prisoners of hope."—*Zech.* ix. 11, 12.

MANY parts of the chapter eviden late to the bestowment of emporal b

upon God's ancient church and people. The text, too, may have a similar application. It is found, however, in connection with a very beautiful prediction concerning the Messiah; see ver. 9. And therefore we shall consider it as applicable and as addressed to all men. Observe,

I. *A true Representation of the fallen Condition of Mankind.*

This is evidently implied. where they are represented as being "in a pit wherein was no water." This shows,

1. The degradation of our state.

Once possessing power, and dominion, and glory. Now crown fallen from our head—gold changed—fine gold dim. No longer a lord; but a toiling slave; our honor and dignity in the dust.

2. The pollution of our state.

'In a pit" of pollution and defilement. Once holy; now unholy. Once free; now the captive of sin and Satan. Soul diseased; no health nor soundness in it. 'The whole head sick; whole heart faint," &c.; Isai. i. 5.

3. The misery of our state.

Prisoners in a deep and horrible pit. Holiness and happiness inseparable; so sin and misery. Restless, agitated, full of fear, and dread, and anxiety; light extinguished—joy fled—peace destroyed, &c. A dark, dreary, loathsome pit.

4. The hopelessness of our state.

"A pit wherein was no water." No source of comfort and happiness left. Death seemed inevitable. Man possessed no power to escape; no eye to pity; no hand to deliver. The prey of Satan, and the sport of the malignant spirits of darkness.

Observe,

II. *A striking Exhibition of the Means of our Salvation.*

"As for thee, also, by the blood of the covenant, I have sent forth thy prisoners out of the pit." Now observe,

1. God is the Author of redemption.

"I have sent forth," &c. God so pitied, so deeply and so intensely compassioned our state, as to engage his infinite wisdom in devising, and his unbounded power in effecting, our redemption. Redemption is always attributed to the blessed God. "The Lord is thy Redeemer; the Holy One of Israel," &c.; Isai. xli. 14; xlvii. 4; xlix. 26.

2 Redemption was effected by the blood of the covenant.

"By the blood of the covenant I have sent forth," &c. God engaged his Son to be the ransom for the world. He made an agreement or covenant with him to this end. And it was stipulated, that he should give his life or blood for the redemption of the world. "Redeemed with the precious blood of Christ;" 1 Pet. i. 19. "Redeemed us by his blood;" Rev. v. 9. "In whom we have redemption through his blood;" Col. i. 14; Matt. xxvi. 28.

3. By this blood of the covenant the circumstances of men are completely altered.

The poor, perishing, hopeless prisoners of the pit, may now "go forth." The claims of law and justice have been fully met. The curse and full penalty of sin have been borne by Christ. Now the light of mercy and of gospel day visits the children of men. Now, God can be "just, and yet the justifier of him who believeth in Jesus;" Rom. iii. 26. Now, there is a way to the holiest of all. Now, a mercy-seat to which the sinner can come, and a plea which he may use, with the full assurance, that he shall obtain mercy, &c. Now, men need not perish: "For as Moses lifted up the serpent," &c.; John iii. 14–17.

What claims has God upon us! "Herein is love," &c. How precious is Christ's blood! Let us not undervalue it, despise it, or trample it under our feet, &c. See Heb. xi. 19–29

SKELETON XCVIII.

GOD'S ADDRESS TO THE PRISONERS OF HOPE.

PART II.

Zech. ix. 11, 12.

In the previous skeleton we noticed, that in the text there is, I. A true representation of the fallen Condition of Mankind. And, II. A striking Exhibition of the Means of our Redemption. We notice then,

III. *The Present Character and State of God's Redeemed Creatures.*

"Prisoners of hope." Without redemption, they would have been prisoners of despair and of eternal wo.

1. All men, until they are actually saved, are prisoners.

(1) Prisoners of *sin*. Sin reigns in and over them. Bound by it; enfettered by

it. Has entire dominion over them. They are the slaves of sin. John viii. 4.

(2) Prisoners of *Satan*. He rules in the hearts of the children of disobedience. Subjects of his kingdom. Led captive by him at his will. Luke xi. 21, &c.

(3) *Condemned* prisoners. Not only by the law, but by the gospel. "He that believeth not, is condemned already; and the wrath of God abideth on him;" John iii. 18. And as condemned, they are liable to the infliction of the penalty, any moment. In a state of extreme peril. But,

2. All men, during the present life, are prisoners of hope.

As we hinted, redemption has materially affected them. Their original state is now reversed.

(1) They have exhibited to them an object of hope. Eternal life is placed before them; and they are called to expect and possess it. "Hope laid up in heaven;" Col. i. 5. "Hope of eternal life;" Titus iii. 7. Eternal life is offered through Christ to a perishing world.

(2) They have placed before them a foundation of hope. The Lord Jesus Christ is placed before the sinner as a foundation-stone, on which he may build all his hopes of present and eternal blessedness. In and through Christ, we may confidently hope for pardon, peace, acceptance, holiness, and eternal glory.

(3) They have announced to them the message of hope. We read of the "hope of the gospel;" Col. i. 23. Gospel is full of knowledge, full of love, and also it is full of hope. Its doctrines are designed to give us hope. Its declarations, to inspire us with hope. Its promises, to fill us with hope. The very end of the gospel is, that we may have a good hope through grace. Gospel sent, not that men may despair and die, but that they may hope and live.

IV. *Jesus Christ is a Stronghold where Prisoners of Hope will be secure.*

A stronghold, or fortress. A place of safety from our enemies. In Christ we are,

1. Saved from sin.

"Call his name Jesus," &c.; Matt. i. 21. "God, having raised up his Son Jesus Christ, sent him to bless you; by turning away every one of you from his iniquities;" Acts iii. 26. Saved from its guilt, by his forgiving grace; and from its pollution, by his Holy Spirit.

2. Saved from Satanic thraldom

He delivers from the kingdom of darkness—binds the strong man—makes the soul free indeed. "He proclaims liberty to captives," &c.; Luke iv. 18.

3. Saved from condemnation.

"No condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus;" Rom. viii. 1–3. Justified freely, &c. Peace with God. Assurance of eternal life.

V. *It is the true Interest of the Prisoners of Hope to turn to this Stronghold.*

"Turn ye to the stronghold, ye prisoners of hope."

Now, what does this turning to the stronghold imply and include?

1. A right apprehension of our misery and danger.

To know and feel our true state. To be deeply sensible, that without help we must perish. To feel as the publican did—as the dying malefactor did—as the three thousand did—as Saul did—as the jailer did.

2. A believing application to Jesus Christ for acceptance and salvation.

He invites such to come to him. "Come unto me, all ye that are weary," &c.; Matt. xi. 28. Receiving the record given of him. Relying upon him. Depending entirely upon his precious merits for pardon, purity, and eternal life

APPLICATION.

Urge sinners to turn to him. Heartily, with all their souls. Believingly, and immediately, without delay. State dangerous. The day of sentence may be near. Soul everlastingly precious; and need not necessarily be lost. "Turn ye, then, to the stronghold."

SKELETON XCIX

THE RICH YOUTH'S ADDRESS TO CHRIST.

"Good Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?"—*Luke* xviii. 18.

INTRODUCTION.—The wisdom, affection, and fidelity Christ always manifested in his intercourse with mankind. Yet we perceive great discrimination. What severity towards the base and hypocritical Pharisees! What gentleness and pity to

tue poor penitent woman, who was emphatically styled a sinner! What affectionate fidelity, in the instance to which the text refers!

Let us notice,

1. *The favorable Traits of Character exhibited in the Question proposed by this Young Man.*

1. The question itself was of supreme importance.

Not a question about the body—about the world—its riches, honors, or pleasures; but it related to the happy existence of the soul forever. It related to the highest blessing we are capable of possessing, and the greatest God has engaged to bestow.

2. The question was a personal one.

"What shall *I* do?" &c. Religion is truly a personal matter. We must first feel for ourselves. Secure it for ourselves. Concern for others before ourselves is false charity, is a delusion of the enemy. We are all personally responsible. Must all render our own account unto God.

3. The question was put at an interesting period of life.

He was a young man. How delightful it is to see the aged coming to Christ! But how much more so, to see the young sacrificing all the allurements of the world, and devoting themselves entirely to Christ!

4. The question was put by one who possessed an abundance of riches.

Few rich care about religion. Riches deceitful. Generally engage the affections; and secure the time, and care, and confidence of the possessor. Generally lift men up in pride and self-sufficiency. Requires great self-denial and humility in such to be sincere followers of Christ. See ver. 24, 25.

5. The question was put with feelings of great modesty and respect.

Nothing rude or repulsive; nothing consequential. Some men handle religious things with an offensive roughness. His behavior was highly respectful. He addressed Christ, "Good Master." Terms implying his admission of Christ's authority, purity, and benevolence.

6. The question was put with great sincerity and earnestness of spirit.

He came running, and, kneeling, said, "Good Master," &c. Mark x. 17. He was not prompted by mere curiosity. Was not cold, and formal, and careless; but he felt deeply interested in it.

7. The question was put by a person who possessed much of the morality of religion already.

He was free from the most notorious and common vices. He had kept, in the letter at least, most of the commandments. He was so generally amiable, that when Christ beheld him, "He loved him." Mos would have thought this religion enough.

8. He put this question to Christ, who was decidedly unpopular to the rich, and to the rulers and teachers of the Jews.

Nicodemus came by night. His followers were persecuted, hated, reviled, and put out of the synagogue. Christ was deemed an impostor; and his gospel was a stumbling-block to them. Yet, to Christ he came and said, "Good Master," &c. He was not far from the kingdom of God. Yet observe,

II. *The Defects which were elicited by the Saviour.*

1. He evidently expected salvation by the works of the law.

"What good thing shall I do?" &c. He was ignorant of the extent and spirituality of God's law; and of his own depravity and weakness. Ignorant of the doctrine of mediation.

2. He was held in bondage by one reigning idol.

The love of riches. He was rich, and he loved his riches. Loved them more than he loved God, his own soul, or eternal life.

3. He was unwilling to yield to the extensive requirements of the Saviour.

He went away from Christ. He was grieved, but not convicted. He went away sorrowful; but it was the sorrow of the world; sorry, because he could not have a rich inheritance in both worlds He went away, most probably, forever. Let us consider, then,

III. *The Lessons which his History furnishes.*

1. The exceeding deceitfulness of earthly riches.

They are the thorns, &c.

2. That we may go far in religious practices, and yet not be saved.

Be near, very near, and yet not within the kingdom of God.

3. We are in great danger from spiritual deception.

He evidently was a stranger to his own

heart. He was a captive in fetters, while he imagined he was free.

4. Religion requires a total surrender of ourselves to God.

"We are not our own," &c. He claims our body, spirit, and soul; and will not accept of any thing less. Luke xiv. 33.

SKELETON C.

SPIRITUAL ARDOR.

"My soul followeth hard after thee."
Psalm lxiii. 8.

Let us consider, I. What religious Ardor implies. II. What are its Evidences. And, III. What are its Advantages.

I. *What religious Ardor implies.*

"To follow hard after God."

1. Dissatisfaction with the world and its fascinations.

Proved its emptiness. Realized it to be a broken cistern. Renounced it, &c.

2. An experimental acquaintance with God.

God sought and found. His mercy, his grace, his love enjoyed. Blessedness of being accepted of him felt. The Lord our portion, &c.

3. The lively exercise of the graces in reference to God.

An increase of knowledge. To know him more clearly, more fully; to trust him more firmly; to hope in him more abundantly; to love him more intensely; and to delight in him more constantly.

4. Earnest desire after more of the divine image.

Seeking after a closer conformity to his blessed likeness. "Beholding, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord," &c. Longing for the whole mind that was in Christ.

5. Longing for full and unbroken communion with God in heaven.

"O that I had wings," &c. "A desire to depart," &c. "I shall be satisfied when I awake," &c.

II. *The Evidences of religious Ardor*

If we follow hard after God,

1. He will be the subject of our constant meditation.

Have our chief thoughts Our meditation of him will be sweet.

2. A dilighnt regard to the ordinances "Lord, I have loved the habitation," &c. "One thing have I desired," &c. "I had rather be a door-keeper," &c. Not forsaking the assembling of yourselves," &c.

3. A growing attachment to his blessed word.

"In it will I meditate day and night." "His statutes are our songs," &c. "Words sweeter than honey, and more precious than thousands of gold and silver." Psal cxix. 72, 92, 127, &c.

4. A cheerful spirit of obedience to his holy commands.

"If ye love me," &c. "Ye are my friends," &c. "Run in the way of his commands with great delight." "Deligh in the law of God," &c.; Rom. vii. 22.

5. A spirit of self-denial, and readiness to suffer for his sake.

Preferring him to the world's smiles—to the affection of friends, wife, parents, children, or even our own lives. Leaving all, to take up his cross, &c.

III. *What are the Advantages of religious Ardor?*

1. Our experience will be enriched.

Science of religion will be more plain—duties more easy—pleasures more sweet—soul more duitful.

2. Our souls will be preserved.

Cleaving to God will be our security, our protection, our help. We need not fear those who are against us.

3. Our lives will be useful.

We shall spread the savor of our religion abroad—honor God—and be blessings to the church and the world.

4. It will ripen us for heaven.

We shall not only have the title, but the spirit and meetness, which are necessary for its enjoyments. "Meet to be partakers," &c.

5. It will increase our future glory.

Holiness expands the mind—enlarges the heart. The more we possess here, the higher we shall be exalted, and the brighter and richer will be our crown—and the more extended our inheritance in heaven. Some were made rulers of one, others of five, and others of ten cities.

O, then, by all these blessed and glorious motives, let us seek after that state of experience which will enable us to say "Our souls follow hard after thee."

SKELETON CI.

DECEITFULNESS OF SIN.

"But exhort one another daily, while it is called to-day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin."—*Heb.* iii. 13.

OBSERVE,

I. *The Evil referred to.*

"Sin." The transgression of the divine law. That which caused,

1 The fall of angels.

Who kept not their first estate. See 2 Pet. ii. 4; Jude 6; John viii. 44

2. The ruin of our world.

Whereby, as by one man, sin entered into the world, and death by sin, &c. Rom. v. 12.

3. That which has treasured up endless wrath for impenitent souls.

"The soul that sinneth shall die" "Wages of sin, death," &c. "These shall go away," &c. Notice,

II. *The peculiar Characteristic of this Evil.*

"The deceitfulness of sin.' Sin is not what it represents itself to be. It is deceitful. As such,

1. It assumes false names.

Malice and revenge, the foulest passions of the soul, are considered signs of a good spirit. Such are men of honor. Pride, so offensive to God, is decency, true dignity. Prodigality, is generosity of soul. Slander, is openness and freeness of mind. Covetousness, is prudence. Drunkenness and revelling, are evidences of sociality, &c. Sin generally deceives by false titles.

2. It prefers false claims.

Claims liberty, from antiquity and long usage—from the prevalency of its influence—from the sanctions it receives from the rich and great, indeed, from all ranks of society.

3. It offers false excuses.

Want of ability to do otherwise—overwhelming power of the devil—the natural, and therefore excusable, constitutional failings—counterbalancing excellencies—goodness of motive, &c.

4. It makes false resolutions

It pleads only for the present—the ease and readiness of future amendments—determines only to make a few experiments, and then to seek and walk in the right paths. Repentance, to-morrow; religion, to-morrow. Sin claims the present now; and gives the uncertain, and the constantly procrastinated future, to better things. Sin is exceedingly, indescribably deceitful. It deceived angels—our first parents—and in some degree, the whole of their posterity Notice,

III. *The Effects of this Evil.*

"Hardened through the deceitfulness of sin." Sin not only deceives, but hardens its possessor.

1. It hardens the soul, so as to be unconcerned respecting all the statements of the divine word.

Commands, threatenings, examples, descriptions of future woes, &c.

2. It hardens against all the admonitions of conscience.

Monitor silenced—voice drowned—feeling seared—fears derided—anxieties mocked, &c.

3. It hardens against all the providences of life.

Frequent disappointments, deliverances escapes, bereavements, visitations of sickness, solemn occurrences, &c.

4. It hardens against all the strivings of the Spirit.

Spirit grieved, quenched; his appeals disregarded; his suggestions despised, &c. This hardness is unceasingly progressive; until it is total, fixed, and eternal.

IV. *The Remedy suggested for this Evil.*

"Exhort one another," &c. Exhort one another,

1. To serious reflection.

On the extent and purity of the divine law; human weakness; great responsibility; and the provision made for our full salvation from it.

2. To constant watchfulness.

That we may not be surprised. To avoid its insinuations, &c.

3. To earnest prayer.

For a clean heart—a new and holy spirit—divine assistance, &c.

4. This exhortation must be mutual.

"One another." All are weak; all in danger. We should love and care for each other, &c.

5. It must be constant.

"Daily." Daily in danger, &c. And this exhortation of each other must be from right motives—at proper seasons—with great modesty—and with much love

APPLICATION.

Warn sinners—caution saints—exhort all.

SKELETON CI.

EVIL SPEAKING

"Speak not evil one of another, brethren."
James iv. 11

THE tongue, a very dignified and important member. Life and death in the power of the tongue. How desirable that it should be sanctified to God, and always under the holy restraints of religion! Many ways of offending and doing mischief. The text specifies one of these, viz., Speaking evil of our brethren. Let us define,

I. *The Sin of Evil Speaking.*

Evil speaking consists in divulging the faults of others needlessly. It is not necessary to the committal of this sin that we circulate what is false. What we say may be partially or wholly true, and yet we may violate the prohibition of the text. There are cases, however, when we may be called upon to testify to facts, as in courts of justice, when we have to bear witness. We may also speak to the person whom we know to be guilty of evil, and with affection reprove or rebuke. Evil speaking is often committed,

1. By dwelling on the failings and faults of others.

Making them the subject of frequent reference and general conversation. Taking satisfaction in exposing them, &c.

2. By dark and partially suppressed insinuations.

Involving the reputation of others in mystery, and leaving persons to form the worst judgment possible of them.

3. By coloring and exaggerating the faults of others.

Passing the boundary of truth. Aggravating their offences, and thus bearing false witness against them. This is palpable and deep-toned wickedness. Notice,

II. *Some of the general Causes of Evil Speaking.*

1. Cruelty of disposition.

Want of those feelings of tenderness and love which alone can cause us to respect the interests of our fellow-men. It is often the result.

2. Of malice and revenge.

We may have really or imaginarily been injured, therefore think we have license to speak evil without hesitation. It often arises,

3. From envy.

Individuals wish to monopolize all the reputation for goodness; therefore try to do so by detracting from that of others. Sometimes,

4. From impertinence and curiosity.

Fools will be meddling. Some know the business of all persons but their own. Sometimes it arises,

5. From a spirit of wantonness and diversion.

Some persons let fly their poisoned arrows, and then raise the fiendish laugh, and say it was in sport.

III. *The pernicious Consequences of Evil Speaking.*

1. It is pernicious to the person spoken against.

If true—it is bad, exposing his defects, sinking his credit, instead of casting a mantle of charity over him. If false—it is verbal assassination, the very next to murder of his person.

2. It is pernicious to the evil speaker.

It is a violation of the law of God—it debases him—hardens his soul—increases his guilt—and will greatly aggravate his future misery.

3. It is pernicious to society.

Keeps it in a state of distraction. Produces confusion, brawls, strifes, and often leads to litigations, and sometimes to a spirit of malignity, and to the shedding of blood.

III. *Notice some Arguments which ought to induce us to avoid this flagrant Vice.*

We ought to avoid evil speaking,

1. Because it implies a judging of others, which is an invasion of God's prerogative.

God will judge. He will not give his glory to another. "Judge not," &c.

2. It is opposed to the general tenor of God's word. Levit. xix. 16; Ps. xv. 3; lxiv. 3, Matt. vii. 1–12; 1 Cor. v. 11.

3. It is opposed to the principles of fraternal love.

We are bound to love our neighbors as ourselves. 1 John iii. 10; iv. 20, Col iii. 12.

4. If persisted in, it will bring certain and eternal destruction upon the soul.

God cannot approve of us—evidently the children of the wicked one—incapable of enjoying heaven, &c.—then how important that we feel the force and spirit of the text; and that we do not speak evil one of another!

SKELETON CIII.

HEAVEN A BETTER COUNTRY.

"But now they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly."—*Heb.* xi. 16.

The text refers to the believing patriarchs described in the former part of the chapter; but is equally applicable to all who count themselves strangers and pilgrims on the earth, and who are travelling in the way to the heavenly Zion. Observe,

I. *The Country referred to.*

"A better country, that is, a heavenly." Sometimes heaven is described as a city—a kingdom—a temple—an inheritance. In the text it is called a country, doubtless in allusion to the country of Canaan, which was a striking type of the heavenly rest. This heavenly country is only partially revealed to us. Perhaps at present we are not capable of knowing much of its nature, &c. In the text it is however stated to be "a better country," better, infinitely better, than the present world. It is better, as,

1. It is a more exalted country.

The most glorious part of the creation. Where Jehovah of hosts has his palace—throne—court, &c. The heaven of heavens. Full of the rays of the Divine glory.

2. It is a more holy country.

Not polluted. No sin within its happy territories.

3. It is a more healthful country.

Sin cause of disease; therefore, as there is no sin, there is no curse. No bodily, no mental, no spiritual afflictions there. "Inhabitants never say that they are sick."

4. It is a more happy country.

Sources of disquietude, grief, and pain, unfeared and unknown. No weeds of bitterness—no crosses—open foes—false friends—imperfect brethren—no poverty—nor bereavements—nor toil—no fears—no temptation—no death.

5. A more abiding country.

Not to be pilgrims, but residents. Not visiters for a season, but inhabitants forever. That inheritance is incorruptible—that crown fades not—that kingdom is an everlasting kingdom.

6. It is a better country, as it is the region of perfection and of consummate glory.

Perfect capacities—perfect enjoyments—perfect security—perfect employments—Perfect day. Unclouded light. Meridian glory. Bliss unchanging and unchangeable.

II. *Believers desire this better Country*

And as such,

1. They have secured a title to it.

By faith in Christ Jesus they are accepted of God, are his children, and if children, then *heirs*, &c. "Begotten again to a lively hope," &c. Names written in heaven. As such,

2. They are laboring for a meetness to enjoy it.

That better country is a heavenly one. It is necessary, therefore, that they be heavenly. Born from above. Heavenly nature. Heavenly dispositions. Heavenly conversation, &c.

3. They labor and pray for it.

Express their desires to God. Seek grace to enable them to travel onwards until they appear perfect before the God of gods in Zion.

4. They converse of it, and live in the hope of its eternal enjoyment.

They seek the company of heaven-bound travellers. Speak of the glories of that kingdom. And their souls glow with the hope of dwelling in it forever and ever.

"The thoughts of such amazing bliss
Do constant joys create."

APPLICATION.

1. Encourage believers to go forwards diligently, with cheerfulness and delight, until an abundant entrance is administered unto them through the gates into the city.
2. Endeavor to persuade the thoughtless children of this vain world to become interested in matters relative to their immortal welfare, and to seek this better country

SKETCH LXIX.

CHRIST'S CONSTRAINING LOVE.

"The love of Christ constraineth us."—2 *Cor.* v 14

The love of Christ is a subject which has a prominen place in the pages of rev

ation. It is the very essence and glory of the gospel. It is of universal interest, and both heaven and earth are deeply concerned in it. It is a subject of boundless magnitude and of eternal importance. The apostle Paul felt it, preached it, gloried in it, and set his seal to its preciousness by the shedding of his blood. Let us then dwell a little, I. On the Love of Christ, and II. Its Constraining Influence.

I. *The Love of Christ.*

The love of Chris passeth knowledge. We cannot know it in its sublime heights —in its profound depths—in its immense breadth—or in its eternal length. But we may know something of it. We may know enough to give us peace and joy in the Holy Ghost. We may know enough to cause us to count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord. Consider, then,

1. The person referred to.

"Christ." Not an inferior. Not a mere equal. Not a created superior, angel, or seraph. But the dignified and uncreated Lord of hosts, Jehovah's fellow and equal. The great and glorious Fountain of existence and happiness. The Lord of angels. The God of the universe. "Both Lord and Christ." "God manifest in the flesh."

2. The antiquity of this love.

We are surrounded with its present evidences, in the word, ministry, ordinances, &c. Paul felt and expressed the sentiments of the text, eighteen hundred years ago—Isaiah—David—Moses and Abraham —first promise—yea, before the foundations of the world were laid, &c. "He rejoiced in the habitable parts of the earth, and his delights were with the sons of men;" Prov. viii. 22. Consider this love,

3. In its objects.

Surely they were dignified, holy, grateful. So far from this, they were earthly, sensual, devilish, dark, polluted, rebellious, haters of good and of God. Without one favorable trait, without claim, without merit, and without any desire for God.

4. In its sacrifices.

What did it cost? Behold the Saviour laying aside his crown—his robe—his riches and honors. Leaving his Father's bosom. Assuming human nature. Living —sorrowing—suffering in name, in body, in spirit, in soul. Especially agonizing in he garden. Dying on the cross, &c. Heaven for a time sacrificed, with all its joy, light, and glory, and all as the evidences of his love to our perishing world Consider Christ's love,

5. In its effects.

In preventing the universal infliction of the curse. Redeeming the world from eternal wrath and ruin. In procuring reconciliation—pardon—happiness, and salvation to man. Opening a way to the celestial abodes of light and bliss in the presence of God forever; in one word, obtaining for us eternal life.

6. In its extent.

Embracing the whole world. And reaching from the first to the last of the human family. John iii. 14–17; 1 John ii. 2, v 14. Notice,

II. *Its Constraining Influence.*

"The love of Christ constraineth us." The word rendered constrain, signifies to press down, to carry captive, to bear away to transport, to impel us onward. This love constrains,

1. To a cordial reception of Christ and his gospel.

Slays the enmity, &c. Softens the heart. Overcomes its opposition. Opens it. Subdues it to Christ's authority, &c. Christ received and loved as the chief among ten thousand, &c. It constrains,

2. To a public profession of him before men.

Christ's name received. Attachment declared. Union with him avowed. All given up, and freely yielded to God.

3. To cheerful self-denial for his sake.

Christ professed at any risk, at any expense, at any sacrifice. Cross borne. Persecution endured. Glory in tribulation Cheerfully suffer with Christ. Give up all for him. Friends, liberty, and even life itself. The love of Christ constrains,

4. To fervent and devoted attachment to his people.

Indeed Christ's love will constrain us to love all men. But especially his disciples This is the true sign, the unchangeable badge. If we dwell in Christ, we dwell in love. "By this shall all men know," &c. "If we love not our brother," &c.

5. To unwearied obedience, and exertion in his cause.

"This is the love of God, that we keep his commandments." If we love him, we shall devise and labor to extend his kingdom, and circulate his fame abroad Long for the universal diffusion of his

glory, and pray for the final triumph of his cross. The love of Christ will constrain us

6. To long for the full enjoyment of his presence and glory forever.

Seek for the complete conformity of our souls to his likeness, and unbroken close fellowship with him forever. "Desire to depart," &c. "To live is Christ," &c. Desire that better country," &c.

APPLICATION.

1. Our subject is the grand leading theme of the Christian ministry.

2. It is the only hope of the perishing sinner.

3. The joy and triumph of the sincere believer.

4. And the song of the redeemed before the throne of God and the Lamb; "Worthy is the Lamb," &c.

SKETCH LXX.

THE HISTORY OF NAAMAN.

"Now Naaman, captain of the host of the king of Syria, was a great man with his master, and honorable, because by him the Lord had given deliverance unto Syria; he was also a mighty man in valor, but he was a leper," &c.—2 *Kings* v. 1, &c.

Let us endeavor to make this very interesting narrative instructive and useful, by founding a series of observations upon it. We notice, that,

I. *Riches and Dignities do not exempt Men from the Calamities of Life.*

Naaman was great, honorable, and a man of valor. Yet he was a leper. All men, whether rich or poor, are liable to the afflictions and troubles of the present life. None too high or great. None too low or insignificant.

II. *The most important Events oftentimes arise from apparently insignificant Causes.*

Here we see Naaman afflicted with a loathsome and distressing disease. Yet a simple event occurs which forms the first link of the providential chain which terminates in his recovery. How often have we heard of a *tract* being made the instrument of leading the thoughtless to repentance! A *word* in some sermon is often as a nail in a sure place, fastened by the Master of assemblies. The *counsel* of a friend may have been instrumental in leading to seriousness and prayer. The Assyrians had taken captive a little Israelitish maid; and she waited on Naaman's wife. The taking of this little maid captive, laid the foundation of those events which led to Naaman's cure.

III. *How necessary that Young Persons should be acquainted with the Truths of Religion.*

This little maid was evidently well acquainted with the religion of her country. She knew enough of Elisha the prophet, to convince her that he could recover her master of his leprosy, ver. 3. Had she been an ignorant, uninstructed girl, she might have lived and died in Naaman's house without being of any particular service to her master.

(1) Young persons should be religiously instructed, that they may be preserved from error and seduction, in case of being placed among ungodly strangers. And,

(2) That they may also be useful in diffusing religious information in every sphere where Divine Providence may place them.

IV. *Religion makes its Possessors Blessings wherever they dwell.*

What a blessing to Naaman was this little maid! So was Jacob to Laban. So Joseph to Potiphar in the prison; and in the palace and kingdom of Egypt. The house of Obed-Edom was blessed for the ark's sake. "Ye are the lights" &c "Salt," &c.

V. *Instruction should not be despised, though communicated by our Inferiors.*

Had Naaman done so, he would have lived and died a leper. God caused an ass to teach the mad prophet. He sent his people to be taught by the ox and the ass. "The ox knoweth its owner," &c. The sluggard is referred to the ant, &c. The anxious to the fowls and to the lilies. Every thing which surrounds us is replete with useful and important information.

VI. *Knowledge is only useful when reduced to practice.*

Had Naaman heard, and not obeyed, the suggestion of the maid in reference to the prophet, he would still have remained a leper. But he acted upon the information, and thus the knowledge became to him sound and invaluable wisdom. So it is not by the possession of knowledge on any subject that we are benefited, but by laying it out, and giving it a practical bearing upon our own experience. It is to know

God and Jesus Christ experimentally, that is life eternal.

VII. *We often apply to wrong Sources for Relief in Trouble.*

Naaman applied to the king of Israel instead of the prophet, to whom he had been directed. How many, in like manner go to the world instead of the church! To the creature, instead of the Creator. To the ordinance, instead of through it to the Saviour. Every word of God is pure, and we should be careful to know and obey its most minute directions, as well as to regard its general instructions.

VIII. *The Ministers of God are appointed to show unto Men the Way of Salvation.*

When Naaman was about to return home disappointed, and a leper still, Elisha sent for him, and communicated the tidings whereby he might be healed. This is the express business of the servants of Christ. To direct sinners to the fountain opened. To point them to the Lamb of God, &c.

> "'Tis all their business here below,
> To cry, 'Behold the Lamb!'"

How solemn, sacred, and responsible the office!

SKETCH LXXI

NAAMAN'S CURE

2 *Kings* v. 10–19

In the previous sketch we founded a number of observations upon the previous part of this narrative. We now have to do particularly with the cure itself. Observe,

I. *The Remedy was symbolical.*

It cannot be supposed that the washing in Jordan was calculated to remove so foul and obstinate a disease as that of leprosy. The remedy was designed to teach the impurity of the disease. The importance and value of cleanness. And to be the external sign of that restoring influence which God employed in the removal of the malady. It was also intended to show the power of the God of Israel, who by so simple a means could produce such important effects.

II. *The Remedy was exceedingly easy and simple*

It was just "wash and be clean." Nothing profound or mysterious in it. Nothing pompous or expensive. Nothing tedious or painful. An emblem of the mode in which many of Christ's miracles were wrought. "He anointed the eyes with spittle," &c. "He spake, and it was done." Yea, his garment being touched virtue went out of him. What goodness and condescension is displayed in the simplicity of means provided for our happiness!

III. *The Remedy to Naaman was exceedingly offensive.*

He was offended. Because,

1. It was contrary to his own preconceived opinion.

"I thought he would have come out to me," &c. ver. 11.

He had anticipated a certain mode of recovery, and he was deeply disappointed.

2. It was too plain and humble.

He expected the prophet would have displayed more respect, and have been more pompous, and would have put his hand over the place, &c. Instead of this a simple message was sent, "Wash and be clean."

3. It was too national.

First, he was offended as a man, because he was not cured in the way his reason had supposed. Then he was offended as a rich man, because he had not greater honor conferred upon him by the prophet. And now he was offended as a Syrian; if water could restore him, why not wash in Abana and Pharpar, rivers of his own country, &c. So he turned and went away in a rage. His servants however reasoned with him, and counselled him, and so at last he renounced his folly and pride, and obeyed the man of God. He went down and dipped himself seven times in Jordan, &c.

IV. *The Remedy was effectual.*

His flesh came again as soft and clean as the flesh of a little child. Hence we see, his recovery was immediate and complete.

V. *His Restoration produced a decided, happy Change of Mind.*

1. He gave God the glory.

"Behold, now I know there is no God in all the earth, but the God of Israel!" He renounced his attachment and profession of idolatry.

2. He was grateful to the prophet

'I pray thee, take a blessing of thy servant."

3. He displayed great tenderness of conscience.

He resolved to worship no god but the God of Israel; and he referred to the prophet a case of conscience as to what he should do when he attended in his official character, the king, his master, into the temple of Rimmon. See ver. 17, 18.

APPLICATION.

1. Naaman is a striking emblem of the sinner. Afflicted with spiritual leprosy. Helpless—wretched—perishing, and beyond the power of recovery by human aid.

2. God has provided a blessed remedy for sinners, the fountain of Messiah's blood. A remedy simple, easy, and in every case efficient. It must, however, be applied. We must come to it. And personally, by cordial faith, "wash and be clean."

3. This remedy is invariably sufficient. None too vile. Too aged. Too unworthy. It cleanses all who use it, and it cleanses from all sin.

4. All who despise this remedy, must of necessity perish. How foolish—how ungrateful—how ruinous, to despise it! Urge upon all, the necessity of an immediate, hearty, and cordial application.

SKETCH LXXII.

THE TRIUMPHANT BELIEVER

"Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?" &c.—*Rom.* viii. 35–39.

OBSERVE in the text, an Important Interrogation. A Triumphant Enumeration. And a Glorious Conclusion.

Notice,

I. *An Important Interrogation.*

"Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" Now the interrogation is intended to denote that nothing shall be able to effect this. It is a sort of challenge. It is a confident assurance that Christ and the believing soul are inseparably united. This will appear obvious, if we consider,

1. The intense and unparalleled nature of Christ's love.

Its eternal origin. Its manifestation when we were utterly worthless, "ungodly." Its amazing devotedness, and the inconceivable sacrifices it has made for us. Brought Christ from heaven to earth. From a throne to the cross. From glory, and riches, and bliss, to poverty, ignominy, and death. Consider,

2. The strong declarations of his love, as recorded in his word.

"Father, I will that those whom," &c. John xvii. 24. "My sheep shall never perish," &c.; x. 27, &c. "Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them unto the end," xiii. 1.

3. The unchangeableness of his nature.

Christ's love is a love of character, and it never varies nor declines. He is immutably the same, yesterday, to-day, and forever. Like the great Father of spirits, without variableness, &c. Observe,

II. *The Apostle's triumphant Enumeration.*

Here the apostle refers to the most peculiarly afflictive dispensations; and triumphantly asks if any of these shall separate the believing soul from Christ's gracious regards.

(1) Shall tribulation? Those peculiar troubles arising from the assumption of the Christian profession. "Through much tribulation."

(2) Shall distress? Being in the most perplexed and straitened circumstances, not knowing what to do, or where to look.

(3) Shall persecution? From friends. From foes, secret or public.

(4) Shall famine or nakedness? Temporal destitution.

(5) Or peril? Living in countries where the professors of the Christian religion are proscribed. Worship Jesus at the peril of the severest terrors of the ruling powers.

(6) Or sword? Martyrdom. The sharp, glittering, keen-edged sword of the executioner.

(7) Or being every moment in jeopardy? "Killed all the day long, accounted as sheep for the slaughter." Nay, none of these, nor yet all these combined, shal destroy the believer. Notice then.

III. *His glorious Conclusion.*

"For I am persuaded," &c. Here he refers,

(1) To death. However terrific its mode

(2) To life. However deep and bitterly wretched it may be.

(3) To angels. Demons. Fallen spirits. However powerful, numerous, malignant, and intent upon our ruin.

(4) To principalities and powers. The governments of the world. However cruel their legislative enactments. However violent and bloody their opposition.

(5) To things present. However numerous, combined, and terrible they may appear.

(6) To things to come. Though the night of sorrow should darken a thousandfold. Afflictions however multiplied.

(7) Nor any other creature. Whatever may have been omitted in this description shall never have the least effect "in separating us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." So far from this,

1. We shall assuredly be conquerors.

The victory is sure. The prize certain.

2. Yea, more than conquerors.

Conquer all. Conquer to the end. Conquer without any loss. Yea, conquer with immense gain. "All things shall work," &c. "These light afflictions," &c.

3. Through Christ, who hath loved us.

Through the guiding influences of *his* Spirit. Through the supplies of *his* grace. Through *his* upholding, protecting, and preserving power. He is the Captain of our salvation.

APPLICATION.

1. Let the subject inspire the Christian with cheerfulness and hope.

2. With humble dependence on Christ. It is all to be effected "through him." See Paul, 2 Cor. xii. 9.

3. With the necessity of earnestly and diligently using the means which Christ has appointed. Especially watchfulness, prayer, faith, and obedience.

4. And finally, let us see to it that we do not abandon Christ's love, and people, and cause. For he saith, "If any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him." Heb. x. 38.

SKETCH LXXIII.

FAITH AND SALVATION

'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.'—*Acts* xvi. 31.

INTRODUCTION. History of Paul and Silas's visit to Philippi—the course they pursued—the persecution raised—imprisonment of the apostles—the spiritual comforts they experienced in prison—the earthquake—alarmed jailer, about to destroy himself—Paul's timely counsel, "Do thyself no harm"—his internal agitation—conviction of sin and danger—his important interrogation, "What must I do," &c.—the answer of the text, "Believe," &c. The subject includes, 1. The Nature. 2. The Object. And, 3. The Effects of Faith. The subject includes,

I. *The Nature of Faith*

"Believe." Now in order to faith or belief, there must,

1. Be testimony.

Something revealed. Some statement presented. And this testimony should be attested by sufficient evidence. The gospel is this testimony. It is a revelation of all that relates to man's salvation. It is supported by a sufficient mass of evidence, external and internal. It bears upon every page the imprint of the finger of God. It is a clear, full, and sufficient testimony. In order to faith,

2. There must be knowledge.

Testimony must be read or heard. "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." Rom. x. 17. The testimony must be known and understood. Presumption, and not faith, is the production of ignorance. Hence the exhortations, "To search the Scriptures." To hear the gospel, &c. Faith consists,

3. In credence or belief.

A firm persuasion of the truth of the testimony. A full conviction and reception of the blessed gospel as the true, faithful, and gracious message of God to us. And this will produce,

4. Confidence, reliance, trust.

The soul will bring this testimony to bear personally. Confide in its rich and blessed declarations; rely on the unchangeable truth and veracity of the testifier; and trust for the full realization of all its promised blessings. Notice then,

II. *The Object of Faith.*

"The Lord Jesus Christ." The object of faith is,

1. The Saviour.

"Jesus." His name includes his offices and work. As such, he possesses saving merit and power. He is a Saviour adapted to the sinner's state and danger. He is an

all sufficient Saviour. He is an accessible Saviour. He saves to the uttermost. He is an everlasting Saviour. And he is the only Saviour. "None other name," &c. The object of faith is,

2. The anointed Saviour.

"Jesus Christ." Who was appointed and sent forth for this very end. Who was anointed with all the fulness of the Holy Ghost. Hence he is called "the Lord's Christ." Luke ii 26. The object of faith is,

3. The divine anointed Saviour.

"The Lord Jesus Christ." For Jesus is both "Lord and Christ." Acts ii. 36. And as "Lord," he possesses all the titles, perfections, and glories of the Father. God blessed for evermore. As Lord, he is possessed of boundless majesty and glory. As Lord, he exercises universal authority and dominion. Heaven, and earth, and hades are all subject to him. Then the object of faith possesses every attribute necessary to inspire confidence and hope, and produce joy and peace through believing on him.

Observe,

III. *The Effects of Faith.*

"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved."

1. From the guilt of past transgressions.

Sins shall be blotted out as a cloud, &c. 'Obtain remission of sins." Be truly and fully pardoned. "Abundantly pardon." He will say, "Thy sins are forgiven thee."

2. From all the bondage which sin has inflicted.

Spiritual chains shall be broken. Prison doors opened. Liberty to captives. Strong man bound and cast out. Vassalage of the devil destroyed. "Thou shalt be saved,"

3. From all the polluting influence of sin upon the heart.

Not only be justified in state, but regenerated in nature. Be freed from its defiling spirit. Sin no longer reign. Be made spiritual. New creature. A new heart and right spirit, &c. Ezek. xxxvi. 25–27. Rom. viii. 1.

4. From all the tormenting fears of sin upon the conscience.

Sinner agitated, alarmed, &c. Fear of the wrath to come. Now these shall be removed. No condemnation, therefore, no fear. Now peace with God, and joy in the Holy Ghost Anxiety and restlessness exchanged for hope and happiness.

5. From all the effects of sin in the world to come.

From a gloomy resurrection. From public exposure, and the dread sentence at the judgment-day. From the worm that dieth not, &c. From eternal wrath.

6. Into the enjoyment of all the blessings of Adoption.

Fellowship with God. A safe and happy death. First resurrection. Glorious reward. Eternal life.

APPLICATION.

Let us then hold up the object of faith to a dying world. Call upon men, upon all men, to believe in this object. To believe in him now. To believe and be saved. Unbelief is suicide to the soul. "He that believeth not is condemned already." "The wrath of God abideth on him," and if he abides in unbelief, he must assuredly perish forever.

SKETCH LXXIV

THE IMPORTANCE OF TAKING WARNING.

"But he that taketh warning shall deliver his soul."—*Ezek.* xxxiii. 5.

The prophet is directed by the Lord to the duties of his office, as a watchman, whose business it is to blow the trumpet, and warn the people in time of danger. He is reminded, that if any one hears the trumpet, and neglects its warning, then the blood shall be upon his own head. On the other hand, he who hears the trumpet, and takes warning, shall deliver his own soul. The text relates to Warning given —Warning taken—Warning effectual.

The text refers,

I. *To Warning given.*

This implies,

1. That the sinner stands in need of warning.

He is in danger—in imminent peril—exposed to eternal death—condemned already—wrath of God abideth on him, &c.

2. God has given the sinner ample warning.

(1) By the solemn statements of his word. "The soul that sinneth," &c "The wicked shall be turned into hell," &c. "He that believeth not." &c. "Wo unto the wicked," &c.

(2) By the faithful preachers of the gospel. "Warning every man" &c. "Knowing the terrors of the Lord," &c. Paul and Felix.

(3) By the reproaches of conscience. How often has it accused, alarmed, and distracted the sinner!

(4) By the strivings of the Spirit. Spirit sent in connection with the word to convince of sin, of righteousness, and of a judgment to come.

(5) By the striking examples of his displeasure. Old world and the flood. Sodom, &c. Pharaoh and his host. Korah and his fellows. Assyrian army. Nebuchadnezzar. Belshazzar. Herod. Jerusalem, &c., &c.

Our subject refers,

II. *To Warning taken.*

"He that taketh warning," &c. To take warning implies,

1. Serious attention.

"Hear ye the word of the Lord." Some will not hear; therefore do not know, and cannot consider. It implies,

2. Earnest belief.

That we credit it. And that it has a personal influence upon our fears, hopes, and desires. An operative belief. Believe it so as to be alarmed and convicted. It implies,

3. Grateful obedience.

That we obey the warning, and thus prove our faith genuine. That we escape from the danger—cease to do evil—flee to the refuge provided—abandon our evil ways, and live; Ezek. xiv. 16; Isai. i. 16–19; lv. 6, 7.

The subject refers,

III. *To Warning effectual.*

"He that taketh warning shall deliver his own soul."

1. He shall deliver his own soul from the guilt and condemnation of sin.

"I am he that blotteth out thy transgressions," &c. "Justified freely." "No condemnation," &c. "He that believeth hath life."

2. He shall deliver his soul from the thraldom and misery of sin.

No longer slaves, prisoners, captives, blind, wretched, &c.; but sons, freemen, happy, children of light, &c. He shall deliver his soul,

3. From the future and eternal consequences of sin.

Despairing death—terrible resurrection—dreadful sentence—and the wrath to come.

APPLICATION.

1. Urge the sinner to take warning By the preciousness of his soul—by his imminent peril—by the shortness of time—by the approach of death—by the judgment day—by the woes of eternity. To take warning now, and thus deliver his own soul.

2. The inexcusableness of those who perish.

3. The gratitude believers ought to display to him who hath delivered them from the wrath to come

SKETCH LXXV.

GOD'S GIFT TO THE WORLD.

"But when the fulness of time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons."—*Gal* iv. 4, 5.

In this rich and comprehensive passage of the divine word we have presented to us, An Epitome of the Scheme of Redemption—An Outline of the Gospel Plan—An Abbreviated System of Christian Divinity.

Let us consider,

I. *The Important Event stated.*

"God sent forth his Son," &c. Observe

1. The illustrious person spoken of.

God's Son. Not his creature, or servant; but his Son. Not a Son in common with believers, or with angels; but his own, his only-begotten, his well-beloved Son. "Brightness of his glory," &c.; Heb. i. 1–12; John i. 1, &c. Observe,

2. This illustrious person was divinely commissioned.

"God sent him forth." He was appointed, and sent, and anointed for his work by God's authority—from himself to our world—as his mediatorial Servant—to do his work, and to declare his glory. Sent by his own free and cheerful consent John xvii. 4, 5. Observe,

3. The nature which he assumed.

"Made of a woman." The woman's seed. A descendant of Abraham. Not begotten after the course of nature; but formed by the Holy Ghost, and born of a virgin. Luke i. 30; Matt. i. 33; 2 Tim. iii. 16. Hence the apostle remarks: "He took not on him the nature of angels; but

he took on him the seed of Abraham;" Heb. ii. 16. Notice,

4. The obligations to which he was liable.

"Made under the law." Originally he was the divine lawgiver, and as such, was above it. But when he became the mediator, it was necessary that he should be made under it. Hence,

(1) He was subject to the ceremonial law. He was circumcised—presented in the temple—he worshipped in the synagogues; went up to the feasts, &c.

(2) He was under the moral law. He lived it; and in all he spake, and did, and thought, he honored it. He kept it, in all its extent, perfectly, and was without fault; guile was not found in his mouth. He also taught it, spiritualized it, and vindicated it.

(3) He was under both the ceremonial and moral law in his mediatorial capacity. He was both the victim for sin and High Priest of our profession. He was under them, as the great sacrifice for sin, who should atone for the transgressors, bear the curse, and thus magnify the law and make it honorable. Heb. vii. 26. Notice,

5. The peculiar period of his manifestation.

"In the fulness of time God sent forth his Son."

(1) The time referred to by the prophets. "The sceptre," &c.; Gen. lxix. 10. The end of Daniel's seventy weeks; Dan. ix. 24. Before the second temple was destroyed; Hag. ii. 6–9.

(2) After the world had been sufficiently informed as to the event, in various ways and forms, from the first promise to the last prophecy given.

(3) When all means for man's restoration had proved totally inadequate. Various systems of religion, philosophy, and legislation, all failed.

(4) When the world was in a state of profound peace. Rome at the summit of her power. Greece in her glory.

(5) A time when there appeared to be a general expectation of him, especially among the Jewish people.

(6) At that particular time, fixed upon as the best, by the infinite wisdom of God. Notice,

II. *The grand Ends contemplated in these Events.*

1. That we might obtain redemption.

"Redeem those under the law." All under its authority—all guilty—all concluded in unbelief—all perishing, &c. Now, he came to redeem us from the bondage in which transgression had placed us, and from the guilt and misery to which we were subjected by the curse. Hence our redemption is from guilt, sin, misery, and eternal death.

2. That we might receive adoption.

"The adoption of sons." Be brought nigh to God—be reconciled to him—form a part of his family—bear his likeness—possess his favor—and enjoy him forever and ever.

3. That believers might thus enjoy redemption and the adoption of sons.

"We." Who have believed in the name of the Son of God, and thus have been privileged to become his sons. "All the children of God by faith." It is only by believing in Jesus, as thus set forth, &c. that we become interested in the present and eternal riches of his grace. John i. 12; Rom. v. 1; viii. 1, &c.

Learn,

1. The way by which redemption has been effected.

2. The invaluable blessings it presents before us.

3. The importance of a saving personal interest in them.

4. Exhort the guilty and perishing to believe and have life.

SKETCH LXXVI.

THE PRE-EMINENCE OF CHRIST

"That in all things he might have the pre-eminence."—*Col.* i. 18.

THE grand object of the apostles was to exalt Christ. He was the constant theme of their discourses. They were willing to be abased; they gladly labored and toiled; and they were ready to die, so that Christ might be magnified. They loved him more than worldly honors, riches, ease, pleasures; "yea, they counted all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus their Lord." How the sentiments of this chapter illustrate these remarks; ver. 15–18.

Let us, then, endeavor to illustrate the

proposition of the text: That in all things Christ has the pre-eminence." He has the pre-eminence,

I. *In the wonderful Constitution of his Person.*

"God manifest in the flesh." "Immanuel God with us." "The tabernacle of the divine glory;" John i. 14. "God over all, blessed for evermore;" Col. i. 15–18; Heb. i. 1, to the end. He has the pre-eminence,

II. *In the unrivalled Glory of his Perfections.*

He is possessed of the attributes of eternity, immortality, omnipotence, omnipresence, omniscience, infinite wisdom, immaculate purity, unbounded goodness, and unchanging truth; Rev. i. 8; xi. 17; Heb. i. 1; xiii. 8; Col. ii. 3; John ii. 24. In him all the proper and incommunicable attributes of Deity are concentrated. The fulness of the Godhead dwelleth bodily in him.

III. *In the Grandeur of his Works.*

1. Creation, in all its extent and glory, was effected by him.

"All things were made by him," &c.; John i. 1–3; Col. i. 16. "By whom also he made the worlds;" Heb. i. 2, 3.

2. Providence, in the vastness of its arrangements, is under his control.

"He is King of kings." "He upholdeth all things," &c. "By him all things consist."

3. Work of redemption.

"Our Redeemer is the Lord of hosts." His arm brought salvation. He is its alpha and omega; all and in all.

4. Work of judgment.

"Father hath committed all judgment to the Son." "Judge of quick and dead." 'Judgment-seat of Christ." He has the pre-eminence,

IV. *In the Dignity of his Offices.*

He is,

1. The great Prophet and Apostle of the church.

All the plenitude and treasures of wisdom and knowledge are in him. "Hear ye him."

2. The great High Priest of our profession.

Without a predecessor or successor. Infinitely higher than any of the priests under the law. Entered into the heaven of heavens.

3. The great Head and Ruler in Zion.

Possessing illimitable authority—unbounded dominion—and of whose reign there shall be no end. "Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever," &c. Christ has the pre-eminence,

V. *In his illustrious Titles.*

He is figuratively styled the Morning Star—Pearl of Great Price—Sun of Righteousness—Plant of Renown—Precious Living Stone, &c., &c. He is also called the Angel of the Covenant—the Prince of Peace—the Most High—Lord of Hosts—the only-wise God—the Great God—the Mighty God—Jehovah's Fellow—and, Lord of Glory. He has the pre-eminence,

VI. *In his unalienable Prerogatives*

It is his prerogative only,

1. To pardon the guilty.

"Remission of sins in his name." He did forgive sin. "He is exalted to give repentance and forgiveness of sin." "Redemption in his blood, even the forgiveness of sin." It is his,

2. To wash the polluted.

"If I wash thee not," &c. "His blood cleanseth," &c. Fountain opened, &c. It is his,

3. To keep his people from evil.

He preserves his sheep in his hand, and saves them from perishing. John x. 28.

4. He receives their spirits to himself.

"Lord Jesus, receive my spirit."

5. He will raise their bodies at the first resurrection.

"I am the resurrection," &c. "Who shall change our vile body," &c.

6. He will confer the crown of eternal glory.

"I give eternal life." The Chief Shepherd shall bestow the crown, &c. "Chris the righteous Judge shall give me," &c., 1 Pet. v. 4; 2 Tim. iv. 8.

APPLICATION.

We infer, then,

1. That Christ should have the pre-eminence in our love, desires, delights, conversation, &c.

2. The happiness of his people. Dignified, and exalted with him, shall be glorified with him. "Heirs of God, jointheirs with Christ."

3. The pre-eminence Christ should have in the ministry of the word. Know nothing but "Christ, and him crucified."

SKETCH LXXVII.

By the Rev. Sylvester Holmes, *New Bedford, Mass.*

THE MEASURE OF THE SINNER'S DUTY

"For if there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to hat he hath not."—2 *Cor* viii. 12.

The passage suggests the idea, that,

The Duty of Man can never exceed his Ability to perform.

A man may be criminal for his inability; but he never can be criminal for not doing that which is beyond his present ability. The man who, by prodigality, has wasted his estate, is criminal, and highly so; but when it is gone, he is no more criminal for not giving liberally, than if his estate had been buried in the ruins of an earthquake.

Moral obligation, then, depends on present ability to do the thing required. Acceptable obedience supposes the ability possessed is put forth under the control of a willing mind, in the performance of duty. Disobedience ever implies existing ability which is not used for right purposes, because there is not a willing mind. In further illustration of this sentiment, I remark,

1. Nothing can be the duty of man, for the neglect of which he is totally incapable of being made to feel guilt and self-condemnation.

There cannot be a neglect of duty without sin; but there is no sin in not doing that for which we have not requisite natural ability. Then, that which we cannot perform, and consequently neglect with impunity, *cannot* be our duty.

2. Man cannot create natural aoility.

He ought indeed, to cultivate and strengthen the talents God has given him; but it never was, and never can be his duty to create powers which God has in a sovereign manner withheld.

3. The reasonableness of the divine law offers further evidence of the truth suggested by the text.

The justice of a law always supposes the power of obedience in him to whom such law is given. It is perfectly clear, then, that a reasonable law measures out the duty of man in exact proportion to his ability; never requiring any *more*, nor any *less*, than he is able to perform.

4. The sanctions of the law, and the threatenings of God's word, all speak in indication of the doctrine before us.

The Bible never condemns men, nor threatens condemnation, except for neglecting that which might have been done, or doing that which might have been avoided. The prospect of heaven is held out to men, not in connection with impossibilities, but in connection with those things which they can do with a willing mind.

5. The joys of the righteous in heaven, and the sorrows of the impenitent in hell, go to prove the truth of our doctrine.

Let the conviction be removed from the redeemed, that justice without mercy would have assigned them to a different place, and their loudest notes of praise would be silenced. On the other hand, the keenest, if not the only pains of the lost in hell, are created by the inwrought and never-yielding conviction, that they perish for doing that which they were not compelled to do, and neglecting that which they had the power of doing. Our subject suggests the following inferences:

(1) The entire free agency of man is acknowledged by God in all his dealings with him.

(2) That he is able to perform every thing God has required of him.

(3) The seat of human depravity. The difficulty does not lie so much in a darkened understanding, and dimness of moral perception, but in a "*will not*" in relation to all God has required.

(4) That no new powers and faculties are given or needed in regeneration.

(5) The justice of man's condemnation is demonstrated.

SKETCH LXXVIII.

By the Rev. Stephen H. Tyng, *of New York.*

THE SORROWS OF OLD AGE WITHOUT RELIGION.

"If a man live many years, so that the days of his years be many, and his soul be not filled with good, I say, that an untimely birth is better than he."—*Eccles.* vi. 3.

In the text the wise preacher supposes a man to have seen the utmost possible limit of human existence. And then he estimates the worth of the whole of this proud and protracted life, if it has passed without the acquisition of that object which the Bible proposes. "If his soul be not filled with good, I say, that an untimely

birth is better than he; for he cometh with vanity, and departeth in darkness."

The text leads me to consider,

I. *The Great Object of Human Life.*

"That the soul be filled with good." It was for this object that man was placed in a course of earthly education, and it is for this alone, that divine forbearance lengthens out to gray hairs the life of man; to see if the hour will ever come when men will be wise, and think of the things which belong to their peace. The possession of an immortal soul forms man's chief distinction from the brutes which perish. A soul which must be rejoicing in unspeakable good, or lamenting amid unutterable evil, ages after the body in which it has dwelt has returned to dust as it was Nothing on earth can offer a recompense for its loss. That man's soul is filled with good who has found a reconciled God—he who has received Jesus in his heart by faith—who possesses the privileges of the gospel. The soul which is the "habitation of God, through the Spirit," is filled with good.

Let us consider,

II. *The Sorrows of the Man who has passed through Life, and his "Soul is not filled with good."*

1. He has passed through a life, the reflection upon which gives him no comfort.

Past days and years rush involuntarily upon his recollection, and bring to him their load of sorrow, and lay it down before him for cool and inevitable inspection. The Christian looks back with pleasure. Job. David. Paul. Polycarp. But what sorrow, anguish, and self-crimination arise in the heart from the retrospection of a wasted life! Youth, manhood, old age, without a cheering ray of light!

2. He is passing forward to an eternity for which he has made no preparation.

This eternity cannot be avoided. With resistless force he is pressed onward to the valley and shadow of death, and to the judgment-seat of Christ. The man is now upon the very margin of the ocean It spreads itself before him with inconceivable magnitude. But he sees it agitated with tempests, lashed into fury with a mighty wind, rising up in anger to the heavens, only that it may the better expose the deep abyss of hell, and proclaiming in every roaring, which strikes upon his ear, that there is no safety for his soul. Unprovided for such an eternity, it would have been better for him if he had not been born. Another sorrow of old age without religion is

3. That he has experienced the vanity of the world, and has nothing to supply its place.

The world recedes and disappears; its cisterns are all broken—its springs are all dried up—and its joys have become entirely tasteless; and in the midst of this wilderness of the soul, he can find no fresh springs of peace and hope. Thus they are left without one source of comfort, to struggle with wretchedness and despair.

APPLICATION.

1. Urge an immediate attention to religion on the part of the hoary-headed sinner. Not one moment to be lost! Soul on the verge of ruin. And,

2. Warn the young against the ruinous evil of procrastination. It may be, now or never. "Behold, now is the accepted time," &c.

SKETCH LXXIX.

By the Rev. Shepard R. Kollock, A. M., *Norfolk, Virginia.*

THE DUTY OF RESTITUTION

"Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold."—*Luke* xix. 8.

The duty enforced by the example of Zaccheus is that of restitution, or the act by which we restore to our neighbor that of which we have unjustly deprived him. Let us,

I. *Show on what the Duty is founded.*

1. It is founded on the very nature of justice.

Justice consists in rendering to every one what belongs to him. Of all the human virtues, justice is the first in importance. This is the cement of human society—the spirit which connects all its members—which inspires its various relations, and maintains the order and subordination of every part.

2. It is founded on the Holy Scriptures Exod. xxii.; Lev. xvi.; Numb v

Samuel's address, 1 Sam xii. 3; Neh. v. 8–12; Ezek. xxxiii 15

3. Restitution is indispensable to salvation.

We cannot be saved without repentance. But do we really repent of our injustice when we refuse to repair it? Is it not mockery to profess to bewail our own sins, and yet persist in keeping the wages of our iniquity? Can we be in a state of grace and salvation, and yet be in rebellion against the orders of God? But whoever retains the property of another, sins doubly, both against the law which commands him to restore it, and against that which forbids him to keep it. And thus he tramples on the law of God, and persists in wronging his neighbor. In this state were he to weep tears of blood, the justice and mercy of God would shut out his prayer.

We proceed to inquire,

II. *What is necessary for the performance of this duty?*

1. We must examine with care, whether we have ever wronged our neighbor, and in how many ways we have done it.

We cannot too carefully examine ourselves on this subject; Zaccheus's vow includes an engagement to make the most exact inquiries.

2. Restitution should be prompt.

Must not be deferred to some future time. Zaccheus did not say, I will restore it, but, I restore it; that is, now, immediately, without delay.

3. Restitution must be full and entire.

Zaccheus does more than satisfy those whom he had wronged; for he resolves to restore fourfold. Your restitution must be exact, and to the utmost limits of the injury sustained from you.

As far as I have been able to search the Scriptures on this subject, the duty of restitution knows no other obstacle than *impossibility*, and no other reserve than what is necessary for the support of life.

INFERENCES

1. How small is the number of the saved! Where are the Christians who repent of their extortions, who have made restitution?

2. What great discoveries will be made at the judgment-day!

3. The nature of true religion. Benevolence to man, as well as love to God.

4. The necessity of paying the most scrupulous attention to the duties of truth and justice.

SKETCH LXXX.

By the Rev. Gardiner Spring, A. M., *New York.*

SOMETHING MUST BE DONE.

"And the priests went into the inner part of the house of the Lord to cleanse it; and brought out all the uncleanness that they found in the temple of the Lord, into the court of the house of the Lord. And the Levites took it, to carry it out abroad into the brook Kidron. Now they began on the first day of the first month to sanctify."—2 *Chron.* xxix. 16, 17

The passage just cited relates to Hezekiah, who, when he came to the throne of Judah, found religion in a very low and languishing state. His father, Ahaz, had been, not only an idolatrous king, but notorious for his impiety. With this state of things the heart of pious Hezekiah was deeply affected; hence he made a bold, persevering, and successful attempt to effect a revival of religion. It is worthy of remark, that the season when these pious designs began to be carried into effect, was the commencement of a new year. Success is not limited to the exertions of Hezekiah. A revival of religion is within our reach at the commencement of the present year, as it was within his, twenty-five hundred years ago. Let us then show,

I. *What a Revival of Religion is*

Languishing graces of God's people revived. Christians anxious and prayerful. Ministers animated and zealous. House of God thronged. Presence of the Lord felt in an especial manner. The careless awakened. Stout-hearted subdued. Prodigals reclaimed. Hearts of adamant melted. Many souls converted. Backsliders restored, &c. Such signal revivals have been no uncommon thing in our world. If you advert to the rising generation in the wilderness. To the reigns of David, Solomon, Asa, Jehoshaphat, Joash, Uzziah, and Josiah. During the ministrations of Ezra. In the days of John the Baptist. Day of Pentecost. Just after this in Samaria, Phenice, Cyprus, and Antioch Acts viii. During the days of the reformers in the 16th century. West of Scotland in 1625 and 1630. North of Ireland

1628. In London, during the plague in 1665. Western world, under the ministrations of Whitefield, Brainerd, Edwards, &c. Let us notice,

II. *The necessity of such a Revival among ourselves.*

The necessity will appear,

1. From the worldliness of professing Christians.

How many seem resolved, at any rate, to be rich. Appear to make wealth their idol, Mammon their god!

2. The indifference of God's people in regard to the power of godliness on their own hearts.

A chilling stupidity pervades the church. Religion seems a dull and languid thing. Sacred flame nearly extinct. Awful blank in religious duties.

3. Our signal abuse of prosperity.

The full tide of worldly prosperity seems to have set in with a resistless current. Thousands are floating on its surface. It is this that casts so dark a shade over the prospects of the church. Prolific source of mischief to the souls of men. The people of God are so intoxicated by the world, so stupified by indifference, so oppressed by criminal unbelief, that we need the effusions of divine grace. Dying men are daily descending to the tomb; and we must have help from on high.

III. *What ought to be done in attempting this great and good Work.*

1. We must repent of our declension.

There must be a spirit of deep humiliation. We must mourn our departures from God. Lament our backslidings. Rend our hearts. Repair to the blood of atonement, that our deep-stained sins may be washed away.

2. We must sincerely desire a revival of religion.

Ardent desires excited. Dying graces quickened. Sensible and strong longings for the outpourings of the Spirit.

3. We must sincerely and fervently pray for it.

Not a soul will be lifted from the pit without the grasp of an Almighty hand. With this solemn truth before us, we must pray for the out-pouring of the Spirit. We must pray habitually, fervently and with persevering supplication. We must "wrestle with God until break of day," we must "weary him," not let him go until he bless us

4. We must act agreeably to our prayers

Bold and zealous exertion. Particular attention to the means, to opportunities Instruction, discipline, &c.

5. We must expect it.

Hope animates exertion. If we expect it we shall think of it. Desire it. Look to God. Rely on God. Pray in faith, &c. Observe,

IV. *When the people of God do thus attempt to promote the Revival of Religion, they may hope to succeed.*

1. God is able to help them.

2. It is God's own cause, on which his eye and heart have been fixed from the early ages of eternity. Object for which the Son of God was stretched upon the accursed tree For which the Spirit dwells with men.

3. God has often succeeded the attempts of others. Let us then bear this subject upon our hearts. In our closets. Let us all bear it until the sacred fire be kindled, and burn deep, and last long. Let us bear it now and with hope. Amen.

SKELETON CIV.

EXALTATION AND INTERCESSION OF CHRIST

"Who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us."—*Rom.* viii. 34.

In the former part of the verse the apostle states the facts of Christ's death and resurrection as the foundation of the believer's non-condemnation or justification before God. He then proceeds to show how this foundation is rendered more firm and illustrious by the exaltation and intercession of Christ at the right hand of God. Notice,

I. *Christ's exalted Station.*

"Who is even at the right hand of God." Now observe Christ's exaltation took place,

1. When he had completed all his mediatorial undertakings on earth.

He had finished all the work his Father had given him to do. No further claims upon him. His engagements completed. The learned writers pay particular attention to this; see John xvii. 4; Phil. ii. 6; Heb. i. 3. His exalted station implies,

2. The Father's perfect approbation of Christ.

He was ever his delight, &c Dwelt in his bosom, &c. He proclaimed him his beloved at Jordan. On the Mount of Transfiguration. He did so also by raising him from the dead. He did so more especially when he exalted him to his own right hand. His exaltation was,

3. The commencement of his blessed and glorious reward.

Rest after his toil. Glory after his ignominy. Joy after his sufferings. Yet it was only the commencement of his reward. For he is to see his seed, prolong his days, &c. &c. Isai. liii. 10, &c. To reign until his enemies become his footstool, &c. Ps. lxxii. 8–20. His exaltation includes,

4. Universal dominion, and equality with the Father.

He is exalted, not to Jehovah's feet, but to his throne, to sit at the right hand of the Majesty on high, exalted above patriarchs, prophets, Abraham, Moses. Above angels —above seraphim and cherubim, &c. To receive the homage of all creatures, and of all worlds. But notice,

5. That he is there officially.

As the High Priest of the new dispensation. To carry on his mediatorial designs, and to consummate the arrangements of his grace. Hence observe,

II. *Christ's glorious Engagements.*

" Who also maketh intercession for us." Here then is an allusion to the high priest of old, who once a year entered into the holiest place, with the blood of the annual sacrifice, to plead on behalf of the people. Now Christ's intercession consists,

1. In his appearing in the presence of God for us.

Appearing with his priestly robes. With the blood of the covenant. Appearing as the great Sacrifice for sin, with all his wounds and scars. His torn and lacerated person. His hands and feet bearing the marks of the nails. His opened side, &c.

> " Five bleeding wounds he bears,
> Received on Calvary," &c.

2. In the expression of his mind that mankind may enjoy the benefits of his death.

" Lord, let it alone this year," &c. " Father, forgive them," &c. " Father, I will," &c. John xvii. 24. We need not suppose that he intercedes by the expression of words, but by the expression of his mind, which is ever known, and ever agreeable to the Father. His intercession consists,

3. In presenting his people and their service with acceptance to God.

As our high priest, he has all his people on his heart. And through him they are accepted of God. He too presents all their services, and by the fragrance of the incense of his merit they are well-pleasing to God. See Rev. viii 3.

APPLICATION.

Consider, 1. How dignified our advocate. The Son of God. 2. How constant his intercession. Not one day in a year—but he ever liveth, and makes intercession incessantly for his people. 3. How extensive. The whole church is interested in it, and the world enjoy the benefits of his intercession. 4. How effectual. Consider his wisdom — fidelity — merit — love, &c. 5. How precious. To the mourner, seeking God. To the believer, in duties and ordinances. When tempted—afflicted—dying, &c. Yes, Christ has died, therefore am I forgiven. He has risen, therefore am I justified and raised to spiritual life. He is exalted, therefore I too shall be with him to behold and to participate of his glory. He also maketh intercession for me, so shall I be accepted of God, enjoy all the blessings of his mediation, both in the present world and in that which is to come.

SKELETON CV

IMPORTANCE OF SOUL INSTRUCTION

" He that refuseth instruction, despiseth his own soul."—*Prov.* xv. 32.

The text refers, I. To Instruction for the Soul. II. The Refusal of that Instruction And, III. The Folly and Evil of that Refusal. " Such despise their own souls."

The text refers,

I. *To Instruction for the Soul.*

1. The soul requires instruction.

In a state of ignorance and spiritual darkness. This is not accidental but natural. Not partially so, but universally applicable to the whole human race, " Darkness has covered the earth, and gross darkness the hearts of the people."

2. God has provided instruction.

By his *works of creation and providence.* " The heavens declare," &c. Ps. xix. 1, Rom. i. 20. In his *blessed word.* Full

revelation of his mind. "Scriptures able to make us wise unto salvation," &c. Ps. xix. 7, &c. By the *preaching of his gospel.* Ministers are sent to turn men from darkness to light, &c. Christ brought life and immortality to light by the gospel. But,

3. The employment of our own powers is requisite to the reception of instruction.

God's works must be considered. His word read. His gospel heard, &c. Attention — reflection — candor — faith — diligence, are all necessary to the reception of instruction. Notice,

II. *The Refusal of Instruction.*

"He that refuseth," &c.

1. Some refuse all the means of instruction.

They reflect not—read not—hear not.

2. Some refuse to consider instruction.

"Israel doth not know, my people will not consider."

3. Others refuse to obey instruction.

They read and they hear, but they are not wise, and remain disobedient to the authority of God. "Hearers, but not doers of the word."

III. *The Folly and Evil of such a Refusal.*

"He that refuseth instruction despiseth his own soul."

For an uninstructed soul is,

(1) In a state of degradation.

(2) Necessarily unhappy.

(3) Will inevitably be lost. "My people perish for lack of knowledge." Ignorance is the poison, the disease, the death of the soul. How foolish and wicked it is to refuse instruction, if you consider further,

1. That our souls are capable of unbounded and everlasting improvement.

2. That they are indescribably precious, in the estimation of devils, angels, and of the blessed God.

3. That they have been redeemed by Christ's unspeakably precious blood.

4. That they are destined to live forever.

5. If lost through ignorance, they will be totally, eternally, and irreparably lost.

6. These souls, too, are ours, "his own soul;" so that to lose our own souls is self-murder, the wilful destruction of our happiness and peace forever.

APPLICATION.

1. Urge the sinner to serious consideration as to his true state and character in the sight of God. 2. The necessity of receiving and improving the means of saving knowledge. 3. The utter and inexplicable folly of those who despise and allow their own souls to perish.

SKELETON CVI.

THE HEAVENLY COMPANY

"After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands," &c.—*Rev.* vii. 9, 10

RELIGION has a thousand advantages by which it is recommended to us. It is profitable to all things pertaining to this life; and it is profitable in relation to all things connected with the life which is to come. Its brightest joys, and its fulness of pleasures, are reserved for the future. Eternity will consummate their felicity. Then they shall appear with the glorified company, who stand "before the throne of God, and the Lamb."

Let us consider,

I. *The Character of the Company.*

This is not left to the uncertainty of conjecture; but is fully and clearly stated. Ver. 14.

1. They were once depraved and polluted.

Ungodly—far off—aliens—enemies—children of wrath.

2. They have been renewed and sanctified.

Washed their robes, &c. Delivered from the condemning and polluting influence of sin. "Obtained redemption through his blood," &c.

3. They have endured the sufferings of the Christian's life.

Passed through "great tribulation." Thus conformed to Christ. "If we suffer with him," &c. Suffered in Christ's cause—for Christ's sake—patiently to the end

Consider, then,

II. *Their glorious appearance.*

"Clothed with white robes," &c indicating,

1. Their spotless purity.

The robe of righteousness; obtained by faith in Christ. The robe of holiness, fully and entirely sanctified; without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing. Complete

y conformed to the image of Christ. Indicating,

2. Their joyful triumph.

"Palms in their hands." Weapons abandoned—conflict over—warfare completed—triumph complete and eternal. "More than conquerors," &c. Notice,

III. *Their exalted Station.*

"Stood before the throne," &c. This denotes,

1. Distinguished honor.

Admitted to the foot of the divine throne. Stand in God's immediate presence.

2. Peculiar favor.

None but his favorites thus privileged.

3. Glorious vision.

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they now see God. "Behold the King in his beauty," &c.

4. Unspeakable felicity.

Fulness of joy, and pleasures for evermore.

5. Affectionate obedience.

They stand there, to worship, to adore, to serve him; to fulfil his will, &c Rev. xxii 3–5. Observe,

IV. *Their countless Number.*

"A great multitude which no man could number."

1. A great multitude.

Heaven is a densely populated city. Thousands upon thousands! Christ's seed as the stars of heaven, and as the sand on the sea shore.

2. A diversified multitude.

Of all nations, kindreds, people, and tongues. Of every age, and grade, and color, and country.

3. An innumerable multitude

"No man can number." None but God shall know the greatness of the glorified company. They are individually and collectively known of him. What a desirable place heaven is! How we should examine and see if we are meet for its society, employments, and blessedness! What an incentive to Christian patience, exertion, and perseverance!

"For all who to the end endure
The cross, shall wear the crown.'

SKELETON CVII.

THE PATH OF THE JUST.

"But the path of the just is as the shining light; that shineth more and more unto the perfect day."—*Prov.* iv. 18.

In the text we have two things: the Character, and the Path, of the good man.

I. *The Character of the good Man.*

"The just." The good man is,

1. Just in state.

No longer guilty and condemned before God. All charges erased—all sins blotted out—all his debts forgiven. Justified freely and fully by faith in Christ Jesus.

2. Just in principle.

Heart disposed to what is equitable and right. Renewed in the likeness of Christ. Delight in the law of the Lord. Led by the Spirit of God. Holy to the Lord.

3. Just in practice.

Is of God, and therefore doeth righteousness. Fruit unto holiness. Faith productive of good works. A holy devotedness to God; and an unblameable conduct towards men. Notice,

II. *The good Man's Path.*

"The path," &c. The good man has a path; a marked, specified, and appointed path. This path is clearly stated in the Holy Scriptures; and has been beautifully exhibited in the example of the blessed Redeemer. Now this path is likened to the shining light. It is so,

1. As it is a divine path.

He created the orb of day, and appointed the path which his beams should illuminate. So God has not left us to follow our own devices; but has opened before us a clear course, leading to immortality and eternal life.

2. As it is a visible path.

The shining light is visible and manifest. So, the Christian's course is not hidden and concealed; but public and manifest,—lights of the world—cities set on hills—living epistles.

3. As it is a beautiful path.

Nothing more beautiful than light. Beautiful in itself, and that which unfolds the beauty of every thing else. Holiness is the beauty of the soul—the lovely adorning of the heart—yea, it is the beauty of the divine mind—brightest gem in the crown of Deity.

4. As it is a benevolent path.

Light is not only beautiful, but a useful source of fruitfulness. In some respects it is the life of the world. So, the Christian's path is one of universal goodness. Salt of the earth—pillars of creation—con

servators of the world. They are so by their prayers, spirit, influence, and example.

5. As it is a progressive path.

"Shineth more and more." Constant advancement in knowledge, love, and holiness. More peace, more joy, more purity. Going from strength to strength, &c.

6. As it is glorious in its termination.

"Unto the perfect day." Meridian noontide splendor. Perfect knowledge—perfect holiness—perfect felicity—day of eternal glory.

APPLICATION.

(1) Is this character yours? Are you just in state, principle, and practice? (2) If not, the reverse of this description is yours. Your path is darkness; the darkness of ignorance—the darkness of guilt—the darkness of wretchedness. And it is progressive and increasing darkness; and will terminate in the remediless and eternal darkness of anguish and despair. (3) How happy and cheering the state of the just! "Like the shining light," &c.

SKELETON CVIII.

CHRISTIAN WATCHFULNESS

"What I say unto you, I say unto all: Watch."—*Mark* xiii. 37

Let us consider,

I. *What is the Nature of this Duty?*

1. It is directly opposed to sleep.

It includes the active state of the faculties of the mind. A state of wakeful consciousness.

2. It is opposed to carelessness.

The vigilant application of the faculties to the arrangements of prudence and knowledge. A spirit of holy caution, and active circumspection.

II. *What must we watch over?*

1. Over our understandings and judgments, that they are enlightened and influenced only by the truth.

In danger of being borne on the stream of popular opinion. Liable to be deceived, or to remain in a state of inglorious ignorance. We must, therefore, know the truth as it is prescribed to us in the divine word. Abide in the truth. Be the children of the truth, &c. We must watch

2. Over the passions of our hearts.

That our love, fear, hatred, anger desires, &c., be exercised upon proper objects. Guard, lest they be perverted—lest we hate what we should love, &c. We must watch,

3. Over the thoughts of our minds.

Thoughts are actions in embryo—plants in the seed. We should especially guard against vain, foolish, and impure thoughts. We must watch.

4. Over the words of our lips

Mouth the fountain of life or death. It influences the whole man. Without the subjection of the tongue, our assumption of the Christian name is in vain. We must watch,

5. Over the actions of our lives.

That we act from right motives—with a right object in view—and according to the right rule, the word of God.

III. *What must we watch for?*

1. For seasons of receiving good.

We need increasing light, and holiness, and joy, and strength. We must, therefore, be found waiting and attending where these are communicated. We must watch,

2. For opportunities of doing good.

To the bodies and souls of men—to our families—to the church—and to the world We must watch,

3. For the solemnities of death

Keep ourselves awake to the fact A tend to the duties and preparations connected therewith. Consider our latter end &c. Prepare, so as to be ready for the coming of the Son of man.

Let us consider,

IV. *When we should watch.*

It can never be an unseasonable exercise. But there are some seasons peculiarly appropriate.

1. In times of adversity and affliction.

To ascertain the mind of the Lord. Watch against fretfulness, impatience, and ungodly shifts, to extricate ourselves.

2. In times of prosperity.

That we are not the victims of pride. That we do not forget God; nor set our hearts upon riches.

3. When engaged in the world.

That its cares don't oppress us—its favors allure us—its frowns alarm us—and its smiles deceive us.

4. When engaged in religious exercises

Whether public, social, or secret. That our hearts are sincere, and our spirits us

der the influence of the true spirit of devotion.

V. *On whom does this Duty devolve?*

It is addressed to *all*. All are exposed to danger. All are frail and fallible. All stand, therefore, in need of watchfulness. "What I say unto you, I say unto all: Watch." Let the injunction of the Saviour—the examples presented by the backslidings of eminent professors—and a true regard to our own well-being, induce us *all*, and at *all times*, to watch.

SKELETON CIX.

THE LORD'S SIDE.

"Who is on the Lord's side?"—*Exod.* xxxii. 26.

INTRODUCTION.—Situation of Moses on the Mount with Jehovah. Infatuated and wicked conduct of the people. God's displeasure against them; ver. 10. Intercession of Moses. Destruction of three housand. The watch-word given: "Who s on the Lord's side? let him come to me." Let us consider,

I. *What is implied in being on the 'Lord's side?"*

It implies,

1. A decided renunciation of the cause of sin.

All men naturally and practically are sinners. This state must, therefore, be reversed. Sin felt, hated, forsaken, truly repented of, change of heart experienced, and change of life manifested. It implies,

2. Believingly to choose God as our portion.

God is reconciled to us through the death of Christ. He offers us his love, his favor, himself. We must, therefore, accept of him, and receive him into our hearts by faith. "This God shall be my God forever and ever." It includes,

3. Cheerful obedience to his commands.

We are on his side if we delight in his law—if we keep his precepts—if we obey his commandments. "Ye are my friends," &c. "This is the love of God," &c. It includes,

4. An undaunted profession of his religion.

To bear his name. To worship him before the world. To commence, and to hold fast a good profession Let our lights shine, &c To be his disciples, witnesses confessors. It includes,

5. A consecration of all we possess to his honor and glory.

A full and free surrender of our all to him. Talents, wealth, influence, all. To feel, and to act, as knowing that we are not our own; that God has a right to the whole, &c

Notice,

II. *The Advantages arising from being on the 'Lord's side."*

1. It is the most honorable side.

Sin is disgraceful to a rational and intellectual being. It involves in disgrace and tends to everlasting ignominy and contempt. Those on the Lord's side have true honor. Angels honor them by ministering to them. God honors them. And they will be publicly honored before an assembled world at the last day.

2. It is the most happy side.

No peace or true joy to the wicked. Like the troubled sea. Like the demoniac. The Christian has peace with God. Inward tranquillity, and joy in the Holy Ghost. "Ways are ways of pleasantness," &c. The retrospect, the present experience, and the future prospect, are all fraught with happiness to the children of God.

3. It is the most useful side.

Sin is as injurious to others as ruinous to ourselves. But this is the side of goodness, pity, and mercy. Breathes universal benevolence to all men. Makes man a blessing to the world.

4. It is the most safe side.

No other state is safe. Sinner is guilty, condemned, and the wrath of God abideth on him. "Wicked shall be turned into hell," &c. Those on the Lord's side are justified, adopted into God's family, renewed by the Holy Spirit, and possess a title and growing meetness for eternal glory. "Who shall harm you," &c. "If God be for us," &c. "Who shall lay any thing to the charge," &c.

APPLICATION.

(1) Congratulate those on the Lord's side. Exhort them to steadfastness and perseverance. (2) Invite poor ruined sinners to throw down their weapons and sue for mercy. (3) Plead with the miserable backslider, that he may return to the Shepherd and Bishop of his soul. "I will hea his backslidings, &c., saith the Lord."

SKELETON CX.

CHRISTIAN IMPERFECTION.

"In many things we offend all"—*Jas.* iii. 2.

Let us notice,

I. *Some of those Things in which Believers offend.*

All Christians offend,

1. In the exercises of the heart.

At present only partially sanctified. Many remains of the carnal mind. Thoughts often vain. Desires often unholy. Delights often earthly, &c. All Christians offend,

2. In the communications of their lips.

The tongue an ungovernable member. Christ's lips, only, were found without guile. How often we speak rashly and foolishly! How often is the tongue the instrument of levity and trifling! Who is clear in this matter? All Christians offend,

3. In the actions of their lives.

How many things improper in themselves! How many proceed from wrong motives! How many done to please ourselves, and not to glorify God! "Who can understand his errors?" "In many things we offend all."

Consider,

II. *From whence arise these Imperfections in the Christian Character.*

1. From the absolute purity of the divine law

It extends to the most secret desires and thoughts. It is exceeding broad. Transcript of the divine mind.

2. From the frailty and weakness of human nature.

This is a state of imperfection. Here the work of holiness is only begun. "If we say we have no sin," &c. Time of conflict. Old man dying, not dead. We see this in the best of men: Noah, Abraham, Moses, David, Peter, &c. These offences against God often arise, however,

3. From unwatchfulness and neglect.

Not vigilant. Not sufficiently alive to our best interests. Prayer neglected. Soul indolent. Means not sacredly and constantly regarded. Graces allowed to be anguid, &c.

III. *What Influence should a Consideration of our Imperfections produce upon us?*

1. Deep humility.

Souls should be abased—prostrated before God—sins confessed, deplored—mercy daily sought, &c.

2. Spiritual diligence.

Religion must occupy our hearts—time—all. Be vigilant, prayerful, believing, and obedient.

3. Fervent prayer.

God has engaged to keep us—to bless us—to save us,—fully, entirely, and forever. His grace should be earnestly sought. "We can do all things through Christ," &c. "Pray always, with all prayer," &c.

4. Forbearance and charity to others.

Our own imperfections should induce us to feel and bear with others. To remember they are men of same passions, and are exposed to the same adversaries and dangers. It should,

5. Excite within us a longing for heaven

There we shall be sinless inhabitants of a sinless world—be perfect, pure in heart and shall see God. No spot, nor wrinkle nor any such thing.

SKELETON CXI.

THE DIFFICULT COMMANDMENT

"Love your enemies."—*Matt.* v. 44.

This command is purely Christian. It is not found in any of the systems of paganism. It is not a principle recognised by deistical philosophers. It is not to be found in the Jewish ritual. It was reserved for Messiah, the Lord Jesus, in whom it was so beautifully exemplified, to enjoin, that his disciples should love their enemies. Let us Illustrate it—Enforce it—and, Answer some Objections.

Let us,

I. *Illustrate this Duty.*

Now, here are two things: the objects, and the feelings we must exercise.

1. The objects.

"Enemies." Such as are indifferent to our well-being. Such as dislike us—malign our reputation—as injure our feelings or persons. Some of them may be secret, others public and avowed, enemies. They may be malignant, and revengeful, and insatiably cruel. Notice,

2. The feelings we must exercise towards them.

We must "love them." It does not mean that we are to approve of them, or be insensible to their injuries; or, that we are not to defend ourselves against them

But we are not to hate them; nor rail against them; nor be revengeful, and attempt retaliation. But to love them,

(1) So as deeply to compassionate them—feel for them—and sincerely pity them.

(2) That we forgive them.

(3) That we pray for them.

(4) That we are ready to relieve them, and do them good. "To bless them," &c. "Good for evil," &c.; Rom. xii. 20. And,

(5) That we are willing to receive them to favor and friendship on signs of repentance.

Let us then,

II. *Enforce this Duty.*

We enforce it,

1. On the ground of Christ's indisputable authority.

He is our Legislator—our one Master—we must hear him, and are bound to obey him. "I say unto you, love your enemies."

2. On the ground of Christ's blessed example.

He left heaven, and lived and died, for enemies. His last prayer, &c.: "Father, forgive," &c. His generous command, in reference to his gospel: "Beginning at Jerusalem."

3. Our acceptance with God is suspended upon it.

"But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your heavenly Father forgive your trespasses;" Matt. vi. 15; xviii. 23.

4. It is essential to true religion here, and to happiness hereafter.

Our services will not be accepted without it; Matt. v. 23. Without it we cannot possibly love God; 1 John iv. 20. Without it we do not bear Christ's image; and as such, are totally unfit for his presence and glory.

Let us, then,

III. *Answer some Objections.*

It is objected,

1. That it is incompatible with self-love.

We reply, that we are not to love the injury, but the injurer, and the soul's sweetest felicity will thus be produced. Our own peace will, therefore, be truly promoted, if we love our enemies. It is objected,

2. Revenge is sweet.

It is so to demons, and wicked men who possess the spirit of the wicked one. But mercy and pity only are really sweet to those who are renewed in their hearts by the saving grace of God. It is said,

3. Revenge is honorable.

It is false honor. The honor of a bad world, and of depraved hearts. It is the glory of the blessed God to forgive us, who have been enemies to him; and it is our highest dignity to be conformed to his holy image. Some say,

4. It is impossible.

So it is to the carnal mind, without divine aid, without crucifying our own carnal self. But Joseph loved his fraternal enemies. Moses loved his enemies. Stephen prayed for his murderers. And the blessed Jesus, who knows what is in man, and what he is capable of doing, and whose yoke is easy, has enjoined it; and therefore, however difficult, it is evidently possible.

APPLICATION.

In order to exemplify this difficult precept, constantly seek the aid of the divine Spirit; keep Christ's example prominently before you; and hold intimate fellowship with God. God is love; and he who dwelleth in God dwelleth in love

SKELETON CXII.

HISTORY OF JUDAS

"Then Judas, which had betrayed him, when he saw that he was condemned, repented himself, and brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the Chief Priests," &c.—*Matt.* xxvii. 3–5.

THE honesty and scrupulous fidelity of the sacred writers. They relate the whole truth, both as it respects friends and foes; describe the weaknesses of Christ's disciples—backsliding of Peter—perfidy of Judas, &c.

Let us consider,

I. *His Character.*

And observe, that he was,

1. A follower of Christ.

One who had owned and professed Christ before the world. It is probable that for some time he was externally at least a consistent servant of Christ. He was,

2. An apostle.

One of the twelve. Filled one of the highest offices in Christ's church; Mat. x. 8. No doubt he had every requisite

qualification, both as regards knowledge, authority, and miraculous influence. Yet he was,

3. A hypocrite.

He was a selfish, hollow-hearted character. Gain only, with him, was godliness. His heart was ful. of lies and deceit. See John vi. 66–70 ; xii. 3.

Notice,

II. *His Crime.*

He betrayed and sold his Lord and Master for thirty pieces of silver. This was the climax in his career of iniquity. It was a crime,

1. Of the greatest perfidy.

Did not desert Christ. Did not become an open foe. But he retained his profession, his name, his office, and apparent friendship ; he ate, and drank, and walked, and conversed, and worshipped with Christ ; and yet, with these marks of attachment, he basely covenanted for his life It was a crime,

2. Of the most aggravated wickedness.

This will appear if you consider,

(1) Who it was that he betrayed. It was a friend—a holy, spotless Person—the world's Philanthropist—man's Redeemer—the joy of heaven—and the delight of God.

(2) For what did he betray him? For sordid gain—for thirty pieces of silver, (£3 15s.) The price of a slave.

(3) In what way did he betray him? Deliberately made the bargain ; coolly executed it ; and that with the sacred symbol of love and fidelity—a kiss. Notice.

III. *His Repentance.*

It is said, "He repented himself." And here we may observe,

1. The time.

"When he saw he was condemned." When he beheld the result of his perfidy. He was not so much anxious for Christ's death as to obtain the accursed pieces of money. It was characterized,

2. By sincere sorrow and bitter regret.

He came to the priests with much deep feeling and emotion ; his whole soul was evidently affected.

3. He testified to Christ's innocency and his own guilt.

"I have sinned, in that I have betrayed innocent blood."

4. He relinquished his ungodly wages.

"He threw down his money" &c. It had been earned too dearly ; it was drinking up all his spirit's happiness ; and he cast it entirely away from him. All these things were well ; but his repentance was that of remorse, of despair, and of death He prayed not—he sought not Christ's mercy—made no appeal to God, and exercised neither faith nor hope in him.

Hence, notice,

IV. *His End.*

His career terminated under the most appalling circumstances.

1. It was self-procured.

Having sold his Saviour, he murdered himself ! Went out to some elevated place and hanged himself ; when, most likely the instrument of suspension breaking, he fell down, and his bowels gushed out. His end,

2. Was hopeless.

He went to his own place. Not that his sin was unpardonable in itself ; but instead of fleeing to the only Refuge and the only Deliverer, his remorse was so truly horrific and insupportable, that despairing of mercy he rushed into the presence of the Judge of all, we fear, with all his guilt unpardoned, and on his head. His end,

3. Was admonitory.

Being dead (and we fear lost) he speaketh, and says to all men : Beware of hypocrisy ; beware of the deceitfulness and hardening influence of sin ; beware of covetousness ; beware of despondency. "Let me die the death of the righteous," &c.

SKELETON CXIII.

THE FOLLY OF DISOBEYING THE TRUTH, &c

"O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you ?"—*Gal.* iii. 1

In illustrating this subject, let us endeavor to ascertain,

I. *What is implied in Christ's being evidently set before us Crucified.*

It is obvious that this is not to be understood literally, as in that case it could only apply to one period and one place. Christ is evidently set before us crucified,

1. In the evangelical histories of the New Testament.

Every thing which preceded, accom

panied, or followed the event is here detailed. Whole scenery of the cross exhibited. Here we may know all concerning Christ, and him crucified. He is evidently set before us crucified.

2. In the preaching of the gospel.

This is the soul of the gospel. The very essence. The grand theme. The sum. The substance. The all and in all. Hence ministers must know nothing among men but Christ, and him crucified. "God forbid," &c. He is evidently set before us,

3. In the ordinance of the Supper.

Here are the symbols of his death. The broken body. The blood shed. Yes, here Christ crucified is very prominently, very significantly, and very affectingly set forth among us.

II. *What is implied in not obeying the Truth.*

By the truth we may understand either Christ, who is emphatically The Truth; or the gospel, which is the revelation of truth. We shall consider the latter as the meaning of the text. In reference to the truth of the gospel,

1. Some reject it wholly.

Revelation disbelieved and despised.

2. Many reject it practically.

Do not obey its exhortations. Are hearers only. Do not yield themselves to God. Still live in unbelief and sin.

3. Others reject the truth partially.

Believe general truths—obey general commands—and acknowledge general principles; but are undecided, compromising, and half-hearted. How does it happen that persons will not obey the truth? Many are uninformed; therefore ignorance prevents them. Many are prejudiced; and dislike to the gospel prevents them. Many do not love the things of Christ; and their being wedded to their sin prevents them, and therefore they do not obey the truth.

Let us consider then,

III. *The Folly and Bewitchment of such a Course of Disobedience.*

It is evidently folly,

1. As it is the rejection of true light.

Darkness is fraught with present evil, and tends to eternal destruction.

2. It deprives of all the solid comforts of religion

No peace, or joy, or hope. Desponding, restless, and miserable.

3. It exposes to the severe disapprobation of God.

God cannot love such. He cannot delight in such. His face—his truth—all his perfections are against them. Even the gospel condemns them.

4. It will end in everlasting and irremediable ruin.

What shall the end of those be who obey not the gospel of Christ? "How shall we escape," &c. Heb. iii. 2; 1 Pet iv. 17, 18. He that believeth not must assuredly be damned. How important then that the interrogation of the apostle be duly considered! Who have bewitched you?

( ) Have men, by their creeds and false doctrines? "If any man (or angel) preach any other gospel," &c.

(2) Has Satan, by his devices? "Resist the devil," &c.

(3) Has the world, by its allurements? Come out of it. Forsake it, and follow Christ. It is deceitful, however fair. Its smile is false; and its embraces, death.

APPLICATION

(1) We urge the sinner to consider his ways—receive the truth in the love of it—and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and he shall be saved. (2) We expostulate with backsliders—and say, Why will ye die? Why forsake Christ? O return, ye backsliding children, &c. (3) We exhort the believer to buy the truth—to grow in truth—to witness to the truth—to rejoice in the truth—and steadfastly to hold fast the truth to the end.

SKELETON CXIV.

THE BLESSED DELIVERANCE.

"Jesus, who delivered us from the wrath to come."—1 *Thess.* i. 10.

In the text we have, I. A Perilous State adverted to. II. A Happy Deliverance declared. And, III. The Blessed Deliverer acknowledged. We have,

I. *A Perilous State adverted to.*

Exposed to "wrath to come." This wrath includes,

1. The actual infliction of the Divine displeasure.

Exclusion from heaven—angels—God Positive misery. An inhabitant of darkness. "Cast into the lake of fire." "Turned into hell." Represented as fire brimstone, horrible tempest, &c., &c "Worm dieth not," &c.

2. This wrath will respect both body and soul.

The soul, immediately at death; and body and soul, after the second and general resurrection.

3. This wrath in its intense fierceness is yet to come.

The day of wrath. The appearance of the Judge. The tremendous sentence, and he fierce outpouring of his judgments yet to come.

4. This wrath will be proportionate—

To mercies perverted—privileges abused—mercies neglected—light possessed—sins committed, &c.

5. This wrath will be eternal.

An eternal night. Impassable gulf. Unquenchable fire. Now those in a state of sin and unbelief are exposed to this wrath—condemned already—heirs of wrath—meetening for it, &c. But observe,

II. *A Happy Deliverance declared.*

This deliverance is the privilege of the justified believer. Now such are delivered,

1. From the sentence.

No longer condemned, but justified freely. Rom. viii. 1.

2. Delivered from the meetness for this wrath.

New creatures. Regenerated. Adopted. Sanctified. Accepted in Christ Spiritual—Holy.

3. Delivered from the gloomy forebodings of this wrath.

No restless anxiety. Mental anguish. Terror, &c. Peace, hope, and joy in the Holy Ghost.

4. Delivered absolutely from the possibility of inflicted wrath.

Interested in God's love and favor. Heirs with Christ. Internal attestations of the Spirit. An evangelical claim to all the promises. Such cannot possibly perish. Must assuredly be saved. Word and honor of God pledged. Notice,

III. *The blessed Deliverer announced.*

"Jesus," who hath delivered us from the wrath to come. Jesus is the divinely appointed Deliverer. The only one. The efficient one. The gracious one. But how does he deliver?

1. Meritoriously by his precious blood.

He suffered for us, the just for the unjust, &c. Died for our sins, &c. Bore our iniquities, &c. Redemption in his blood, &c. Col. i. 14. Isai. liii. 5; John i. 29.

2. Instrumentality, by his word.

It is the word of salvation. "Able to make us wise," &c. "Ye shall know the truth," &c. "Power of God to salvation," &c.

3. Efficiently by his Spirit.

Spirit uses the word. Makes it effectual in illuminating, convincing, saving, &c.

4. He will deliver us personally and eternally.

By raising our bodies, and receiving us into his kingdom, and bestowing the crown of glory that fadeth not away. 1 Pet. v. 4.

APPLICATION.

(1) Let the believer be grateful, holy, and devoted to Christ. (2) Encourage the inquirer. (3) Warn the careless. (4) Threaten the incorrigible. (5) Exhort all to seriousness and consideration.

SKELETON CXV.

THE IMPORTANCE OF POSSESSING THE MIND OF CHRIST.

PART I.

"Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus."—*Phil.* ii. 5.

All true religion is connected with Christ. Its doctrines he revealed—its principles he exhibited—its blessings he provided—its duties he enforced—its spirit he ever manifested. The Christian, then, is one who believes these doctrines—who is influenced by these principles—who enjoys these blessings—who discharges these duties—and who evinces this spirit. And this is recognised in the text, where the apostle says, "Let this mind be in you," &c. In reference to this mind, let us I. Exhibit its Nature. II. The Means of its Attainment. And, III. The Importance of its Possession. Let us,

I. *Exhibit its Nature.*

What is that mind which was in Christ Jesus?

1. It was a mind distinguished for spiritual knowledge.

He was the true light. He knew all things. In him were hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

2. It was a mind of holy obedience.

He loved God's law. It was his delight. Every desire, and purpose, and thought

was in pleasing conformity to the spotless mind of God.

3. It was a mind of pure and fervent devotion.

The whole career of Christ was distinguished for this. He held the closest communion with God. He spent whole nights in prayer. All his miracles and discourses were connected with prayer. It was displayed when he was baptized—when tempted—when transfigured—when in the garden—when on the cross. Yes, devotion was the element in which he lived, and in which he died.

4. It was a mind of unvaried meekness.

He infinitely excelled Moses in this respect. Under circumstances of the greatest provocation—when reproached, calumniated—when classed with demons—when associated with publicans, and harlots, and thieves, he displayed the most perfect self-possession and composure. He never reviled his calumniators, he never railed again. He never displayed unhallowed passion, or a spirit of revenge. He wept over his vilest enemies, and he prayed for his murderers.

5. It was a mind of the greatest possible self-abasement.

Though Lord of angels, God blessed forever, yet he became a servant, yea, the servant of servants. He affectionately served his enemies. He served the world, the poorest and vilest of mankind—he condescended to the lowest offices—he washed his disciples feet—he avoided the praises and honors the people desired to confer upon him—"he humbled himself, and became obedient even unto the death of the cross."

6. It was a mind of constant energy and activity.

It was his meat and drink to do his Father's will. He *went about* doing good. "I must work," &c. His whole ministry was one scene of constant active engagements. His whole soul was devoted to it. And his work and life terminated together. The zeal of the Lord's house ate him up. "I have a baptism," &c.

7. It was a mind of unexampled benevolence, tenderness, and pity.

This caused him to engage in the redeeming work, and this caused him to finish it. He loved mankind. His soul was absorbed in deepest interest for them. He gave his life for their ransom, and thus manifested to the world a benevolence without a parallel and beyond description "Herein is love," &c. "Greater love," &c. His life was benevolence embodied and exhibited. His words—his thoughts—his prayers—his miracles—his death, all attest to the incomprehensibleness of his pity and love. And how tender he was to the weakness and infirmities of mankind! "A bruised reed," &c.

8. It was a mind of holy patience and resignation.

He was never known to utter one murmuring word. He was resigned to all his Father's will. He freely drank the bitter cup. "He was led as a lamb to the slaughter," &c. "Endured the contradiction of sinners," &c. These then are some of the features that distinguished the mind of Christ. And this is the mind which should also be in all who are called by his name, and profess to be his disciples.

APPLICATION.

(1) Let the mind of Christ be clearly examined and studied by all his followers. (2) Let it be constantly kept before our eyes, that we may always be looking to Jesus, &c. (3) Let conformity to it be the anxious desire of our hearts. "All we with open face," &c.

SKELETON CXVI.

THE IMPORTANCE OF HAVING CHRIST'S MIND

PART II.

Philip. ii. 5.

In the former skeleton we noticed the nature of that mind that was in Christ. Let us now consider,

II. *The Means of its Attainment.*

How are we to obtain like-mindedness with Christ?

1. By studying him as our only model.

We must keep him before our eyes. Be constantly recalling to ourselves the lovely and amiable traits of character which he possessed. Make ourselves familiar with all the holy footsteps of his life. Meditate upon all the circumstances in which he was placed, and the spirit he manifested upon all occasions. Set the Lord ever before you, &c. "Consider Christ," &c. "All

we with open face, beholding as in a glass," &c.

2. By seeking the aids of his Holy Spirit.

It is the province of the Spirit to change the heart. He only can impart the influence which will transform us into Christ's holy likeness. He will lead us to a closer acquaintance with Christ. Gradually erase the features of the old Adam, and imprint the blessed features of the Redeemer's holy image. We should seek then to be filled with the Spirit—to walk in the Spirit, &c.

3. By practically conforming to his blessed example.

Study and prayer will do much, but our knowledge and convictions must be embodied. We must really walk as he walked. Imitate all his imitable conduct. Act towards friends as he did—towards the world as he did—towards the blessed God as he did. Imitate him in prosperity, and rejoice in spirit—imitate him in sorrow, by patience and resignation to the will of God—imitate him under reproach, and bless and pray for our vilest enemies. In this way we shall be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus, and be more fully and deeply conformed to his spiritual likeness. Consider, in reference to Christ's mind,

III. *The Importance of its Possession.*

"Let the same mind be in you," &c. We ought to possess the same mind that was in Christ,

1. On the ground of consistency.

We bear his name, profess to be his disciples, &c. If so, then we should resemble him. Walk as he walked, &c. Exhibit a spirit and conversation like his. Christ demands it. World will look for it.

2. On the ground of comfort and happiness.

We cannot be truly happy without it Our peace and comfort will be in exact proportion to it. We cannot have holy fellowship with him unless we have his mind, &c.

3. On the ground of usefulness.

Christ's mind will not only make us happy, but useful, make us a blessing to those around. We shall then truly be "lights," "elevated cities," "the salt of the earth," &c.

4. On the ground of safety.

Without it we cannot be saved. Indeed, this is salvation, to have within us Christ's mind. And without this conformity we cannot be meet for the celestial inheritance. Without it, were we admitted, we could not possibly enjoy it. Rom. viii. 29.

5. On the ground of future glory.

The closer our likeness to Jesus, the greater our future dignity—the sweeter our felicity—the more abundant our reward. O how desirable then to be deeply solicitous to possess the whole mind that was in Christ!

APPLICATION.

(1) Learn the true test of vital religion—the possession of Christ's mind. (2) What need of fervent devotedness to God! How imperfectly is this possessed by the best of Christians! (3) Invite sinners to be of one mind with Christ, to believe in his name, and be everlastingly saved

SKELETON CXVII.

THE CERTAIN CONNECTION BETWEEN INCORRIGIBLENESS AND RUIN

"Who hath hardened himself against him, and hath prospered?"—*Job* ix. 4

Let us, in considering the solemn interrogation of the text, notice, The Nature of Incorrigibleness—and its Ruinous Effects.

I. *The Nature of Incorrigibleness.*

This is evidently included in the sinner "hardening himself" against God. Here two things are included.

1. The sinner is against God.

In a state of opposition, dislike, hostility The most perfect variance between them. Now this will apply,

(1) To the heart of the sinner. This is the seat of depravity, it is carnal, at enmity with God, not subject, &c. Palace of the devil. Sepulchre of uncleanness Jer. xvii. 9; Matt. xv. 9; Rom. viii. 7.

(2) To the mouth of the sinner. The sinner's lips speak against God. "The mouth of the wicked poureth out evil things." "Is his destruction." "Is full of cursing and bitterness." Prov. xv. 2; xviii. 7; Matt. xv. 11. It applies,

(3) To the life of the sinner. "A bad man, out of the treasury of a bad heart," &c. His whole career is associated with evil, and with evil only. Wherever he moves, or whatever he does, is tinctured with sin. His life is one continued act of rebellion towards God. He doeth evil and that continually. Now consider

2. What it is for the sinner to harden himself against God.

It includes,

(1) Progression in evil. Going onwards in vice. Waxing worse and worse. Habits of sin strengthened. Love to sin increased, &c.

(2) Increased indifference to God. Fear of God thrown off. God not in all his thoughts. The greatness and terribleness of God lost sight of, until sin is performed with impunity.

(3) Presumptuous daring of God. "Who is the Lord," &c. His authority totally slighted. His threatenings despised. No fear of his judgments. Try to live as if God existed not, &c. What a fearful state of mind! How unreasonable—how ungrateful—how unjust—how base!

Notice,

II. *Its ruinous effects.*

'Who hath hardened himself—and hath prospered?" Prospered really, spiritually, in reference to body and soul, to both worlds. External riches no certain sign of prosperity. Such often the most wretched. For those to prosper who harden themselves against God is impossible.

1. For when God is against a man, all things are against him.

Conscience, no peace, &c. Providences are against him—word against him—all creatures, &c. God can make his food bitter—his nights sleepless—his riches, piercing thorns—his pleasures, poison. He can thwart his plans—discomfit his designs—multiply his foes—remove his friends, and fill him both in body and soul with wretchedness and wo. This will be evident,

2. From the examples left on the records of revelation.

Did Cain prosper? Did the inhabitants of the old world? Did Pharaoh? Did the unbelieving Jews? Did Nebuchadnezzar—Belshazzar—Herod? No, they all perished. They were all overcome. They were all plunged into inextricable ruin.

3. This must always necessarily be the case.

If a man refuse the light, he must be in darkness. If a man cast off God, he inevitably casts off peace, and joy, and hope, and the very possibility of happiness. Against God, and he is truly his own adversary, and must involve himself in certain misery. "Whatsoever a man sows, that he must also reap," &c. Then let the sinner be warned of his perilous condition, and be exhorted to sue for peace, and be reconciled to God through Jesus Christ. The callous and hardened must inevitably perish. Religion and prosperity are inseparably allied. "Godliness is profitable," &c.

SKELETON CXVIII.

LONGING FOR CHRIST

PART I.

'Even so, come, Lord Jesus."—*Rev.* xxii. 20

CHRIST is the Alpha and Omega, both of revelation and of the Christian's experience. The Christian lives by Christ, and to Christ. Christ is his life, strength, salvation, yea, all and in all. He loves Christ, delights in Christ, and longs for the full enjoyment of his presence, in the heavenly world. His heart continually aspires after him. He says, "Even so; come, Lord Jesus." Let the text be considered as breathing the desires, I. Of the Penitent Inquirer. II. Of the Believer in the various circumstances of life; and, III. Of the Christian, when approaching the gates of death.

Let us consider the text,

I. *As the Language of the Penitent Inquirer.*

Such as have felt the bitterness of sin, and have seen the importance of salvation, and who are ardently desiring the enjoyment of his grace. Such desire Christ to come,

1. As the Sun of Righteousness, to chase away their spiritual gloom.

They know their darkened state and deplore it. They pray, Lord Jesus, that we may receive our sight. Open our eyes &c. Arise with healing, &c. "Even so come, Lord Jesus." Such desire Christ,

2. To come as their Deliverer, to free them from the bonds of guilt.

They are the captives of the wicked one. Fast bound in fetters. Groan to be released. Cannot deliver themselves Ready to perish. Therefore they cry out, "Come, Lord Jesus," &c. Burst our bonds—remove our load—give us rest—make us free, and we shall be free indeed

3 Such desire Christ to come as their Teacher, to reveal to them all the lessons of his grace.

God has appointed that they should hear Christ. His doctrines only can give comfort, and joy, and hope. His gospel is he power of God, &c. His truth makes free. At his feet only can they learn the way of life. He opens to the mind the way of salvation, and the only path to immortality and eternal glory. "Grace is poured into his lips," &c. "Grace and truth," &c.

4. Such desire Christ to come as their great High Priest, to bless them with the tokens of his favor.

He has atoned for their sins by the shedding of his precious blood. He has sprinkled the mercy-seat Opened a way of access to the holiest of all. Penitent souls long therefore that he would come forth and bless them with the knowledge of salvation, &c. That he would send down his purchased blessings into their hearts. That he would sprinkle their consciences with his blood Renew their souls into the Divine likeness—and cause his Spirit to dwell in them forever.

5. Such desire Christ to come as their Lord, and to establish his gracious empire in their souls.

Sin has reigned—Satan has ruled within them—but now they desire grace to reign, and Christ to be the Lord of their affections, and constantly to sit on the throne of their hearts. They are now willing to consecrate themselves to the Lord. They are now determined to forsake all and follow him. They are now resolved to know nothing but Christ, &c.

6. Such desire Christ to come and be formed within them the hope of glory.

This is the believer's privilege, that Christ dwell in them. "Christ in you, the hope of glory." Col. . 27. "Begotten again to a lively hope," &c. This is the foretaste of heaven. Glory in embryo. Paradise regained. Salvation begun. For we are saved by hope, &c. Rom. viii. 24.

APPLICATION.

Let penitent inquirers thus seek for Christ's spiritual coming into their souls. Let them earnestly—with persevering fervor—and with holy expectation and confidence say, "Even so; come, Lord Jesus."

SKELETON CXIX.

LONGING FOR CHRIST

PART II.

Rev. xxii. 20.

Let us now consider the text,

I. *As the Language of the Believer in the various Circumstances of Life.*

This will be the believing soul's desire,

1. When desiring a greater conformity to Christ's holy image.

God hath predestinated that we be conformed to the image of his Son. We are to bear the image of the second Adam, the Lord from heaven. In regeneration this image is formed; and it is the work of sanctification to carry it on, and complete it. But Christ only can effect this. He is both the Author and Finisher of our faith He is our head; and in him we live, and grow in the Christian life. The believer desires to rise in holy likeness to Jesus. He seeks the whole mind that was in Christ; and hence he prays: "Come, Lord Jesus!" make me wholly, fully, and eternally thine!

2. When desiring the invigoration of the graces of the Spirit within him.

Hence the soul cries: "Lord, increase my faith—Lord, inflame my love—Lord, brighten my hope—enlarge my desires—expand my heart—adorn me with all that is humble, and meek, and patient, and tender, and gentle, and divine. May I bear much as a branch of thee, the Living Vine. 'Even so; come, Lord Jesus.'"

3. When engaged in the holy duties of the Christian profession.

"Come, Lord Jesus;" and be ever before my eyes, as my blessed Exemplar Come, and inspire my soul with purity of motive, and with singleness of heart; and enable me to do thy will, that thy power may be exhibited. Come, and by thy holy sway bring my every power into subjection to thy blessed word and will. May I love duty, and run with joy in the way of thy commandments.

4. When engaged in the public worship of his house.

The believer loves God's house. He goes there with delight. He prefers it above all places. He loves those who meet with him. He loves the services—prayer, praise, the word, the gospel. But all this is not enough. He desires to see

the beauty of the Lord; to have fellowship with God; to meet with Christ, and to banquet with him. Hence he goes beyond all the externals of worship, and breathes forth the text: "Even so; come, Lord Jesus." Now appear—now visit thy holy place. "I beseech thee, show me thy glory."

5. When employed in attempting to extend the divine glory.

All Christ's disciples are to seek to honor him, and to extend his cause. This is to be attempted by the devotion of our talents and influence to his cause. But all will be ineffectual without Christ's blessing. He must be with us. He must give the aids of his grace—the influences of his Spirit. Then we must feel our own inadequacy, and rely upon the blessing of Christ.

6. When passing through the temptations and troubles of the Christian life.

The Christian can do nothing without Christ; but all things through Christ strengthening him. He, therefore, says in temptation—Lord Jesus, help; in trouble—Lord Jesus, succor; in danger—Lord Jesus, deliver; in conflicts—Lord Jesus, enable me to triumph; and in every scene of affliction—"Even so, come, Lord Jesus;" Lord, save; Lord, help; Lord, undertake; Lord, deliver, or I perish. And how consoling, Christ is ever with his people! He will never leave nor forsake them! He is their Sun and Shield—near at hand—and both "able and willing to save to the uttermost all who come unto God by him; seeing that he ever liveth to make intercession for them."

SKELETON CXX.

LONGING FOR CHRIST

PART III.

Rev. xxii. 20

HAVING applied the text, I. To the State of the Penitent Inquirer. And, II. To the State of the Believer in the various circumstances of life. We shall now,

III. *Consider it as the Language of the Christian when approaching the Gates of Death.*

And the Christian must die as well as other men. But his death is gain. It is the entrance upon undying life. He dies in Christ. And he dies joyously, exclaiming: "Even so, come, Lord Jesus!" He desires Christ to come, and,

1. Finish all his gracious work within him.

All evil must now be annihilated. Every root of bitterness torn up. Every unhallowed desire annihilated. Every grace completed. Every qualification perfected. Mind full of light and joy. Heart full of comfort and peace. Spirit full of holiness and love. Title to heaven clear. Evidence of the divine favor bright. Hope of glory luminous. Top-stone of salvation's work ready to be fixed with shoutings of, Grace, &c. He says,

2. Come, Lord Jesus, and strengthen me for the last struggle.

Thou hast ever been on my right hand, and I have never been moved. But this conflict is with an unknown, an untried adversary. He is nature's great abhorrence—king of terrors—the last enemy. His attack, too, is when I am weakest. Oh, then, Lord, undertake thou for me. Let the ensign of thy cross wave before my eyes. Let me read thy illustrious title as the Resurrection and Life of thy people. Let me view death among the chartered blessings of thy redeeming grace Let thy presence illumine, cheer, comfort, and guide me through the valley of death. "Come, Lord Jesus." All else fails. Earth recedes. Time with me ends. Eternity dawns "O Death, where is thy sting?" &c.

3. Come, Lord Jesus, and receive me to thy presence and glory.

My tabernacle is dissolving—my earthly house failing—fulfil thy promise—receive me to thyself, thy kingdom, our Father's house, the mansions of bliss and glory. My day of labor is ended—give me the promised penny. My race is terminated—let me touch the blessed goal, and receive the never-fading wreath. The toil is over, and the warfare finished—now bestow the crown of glory, &c. "Come, Lord Jesus," as my Captain, and give me a place among the conquering hosts—as my Bridegroom, and receive me to the eternal embraces of thy bosom—as my Elder Brother, and let me share the inheritance, sit down on thy throne, and be glorified with thee. Lord Jesus, receive my spirit, and save me forever.

And Christ will come to his dying people. He will be near. He will hear, and

he will save them. He will—he cannot fail in aught he has promised. And he will give them a place among the company of the redeemed in heaven forever and ever.

APPLICATION.

(1) Have we sought the favor of Christ—and do we enjoy it? (2) Do we seek his grace on all occasions? Do we live to him, and enjoy fellowship with him? (3) Then be assured, he will cheer us in sorrow, deliver us in trouble, and at death glorify us with his own glory forever and ever. "Even so; come, Lord Jesus!" "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen."

SKETCH LXXXI.

SELF-CONSECRATION

"I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service."—*Rom.* xii. 1.

The body of man has been highly extolled and dignified by God. It was so by the beauty with which it was adorned in its creation. It is so in its wonderful structure, and the power with which it is invested He hath also dignified it especially, by the honor conferred in the incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ. The blessed Redeemer assumed, and lived, and died, arose, and ascended to heaven, in a body like our own. At the resurrection the body will be clothed with immortal vigor, and be transformed into the likeness of Christ's glorious body, and shine forth in the kingdom of our Father forever and ever. We need not wonder, therefore, that God requires the consecration of the body to himself. It is his by creation, by the cares of his benignant providence, and by the redeeming blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. We are bound, therefore, to glorify him with both body and soul, which are his. It is probable that by body, in the text, the apostle more especially means the whole entire man, as the entire animals were offered in sacrifice to which he obviously refers.

Let us consider, then,

I. *The Course recommended*

II. *The Motives suggested.*

I. *The Course recommended*—"present your bodies a living sacrifice," &c.

The Lord demands,

1. The body.

Including the whole man. Both the material and spiritual natures we possess. The eye, the ear, the tongue, the hands, the feet, are all to be hallowed to his service. All the faculties of the soul, too are to be devoted to him. Understanding to know; judgment to approve; will to choose; conscience to admonish; and the affections to be supremely placed upon him. God requires the body as,

2. A sacrifice

Ancient victims for sacrifice were first taken from their flocks, and then laid upon the altar of the Lord. He calls upon us to come out of the world, and to be separate. And also to be bound and consecrated to his service forever. As the life of the sacrifice was yielded, so God requires that we should live entirely to him, and be dead to the world. God requires that this sacrifice,

3. Should be living.

"A living sacrifice." Originally God would not have the carcasses of beasts offered that had previously died. They must be brought alive, and slain expressly for the purpose. So God requires that we should yield ourselves in life to him. The dead cannot repent, or believe, or serve him. This sacrifice must also,

4. Be holy.

That is, a sacrifice without blemish or defect. God requires that we devote our hearts wholly to love and serve him. That we be his entirely and unreservedly, and bring forth the fruits of holiness to the honor and glory of his name. This sacrifice must,

5. Be acceptable unto God.

Now we can only be acceptable to God when we come to him in the *way* he has prescribed in his own word, through the *medium* he hath appointed, even the Lord Jesus Christ, and with the dispositions he requires, even faith and sincerity of heart God demands that all this,

6. Be the voluntary act of the soul.

Hence we are to "present," that is, freely to give ourselves to the Lord. This surrender of ourselves must be the cheerful and hearty act of our own minds. The affections must be fixed upon him, and th

will deliberately choose him. Let us notice,

II. *The Motives suggested.*

These are two, "The mercies of God," and the "reasonableness of the service." The first motive urged is,

1. The mercies of God.

Does not appeal to judgments, or threatenings, but to mercies. And the mercies of God are numerous and diversified. Temporal mercies, as life and health; bounties of providence; preservation. Spiritual mercies; God's great unspeakable gift,—the mercy promised to the fathers. The written word,—the gospel;—the Holy Spirit;—the ordinances—and precious promises, with all the unspeakable benefits and blessings of divine grace. It is urged, also,

2. Because it is a reasonable service.

True religion accords with the highest reason. Reverence to a parent, obedience to a master, and subjection to a monarch, is highly reasonable. God is the best of parents, our heavenly master, and our gracious King. Is it not reasonable that the soul should be preferred to the body, heaven to earth, and eternity to time? There is nothing in religion which is unreasonable. Repentance is not; faith is not; prayer is not; obedience is not. Even reproach and suffering are not, with the prospect of an eternal reward.

APPLICATION.

The apostles beseeched that they would thus present themselves to God.

Christian ministers should keep this model before them. And beseech men to make it a matter of solemn consideration, earnest attention, and immediate practical regard.

Men may be beseeched, by the worth of the soul; the value of salvation; the shortness of time; and the joys of eternity.

All men should be beseeched. Beseeched now; and beseeched to give themselves wholly to God, which is their reasonable service.

SKETCH LXXXII

HISTORY OF NEBUCHADNEZZAR.

"The same hour was the thing fulfilled upon Nebuchadnezzar, and he was driven from men, and did eat grass as oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven, till his hairs were grown like eagles' feathers, and his nails like birds' claws."—*Dan.* iv 33

The history of Nebuchadnezzar is peculiarly astonishing. There is nothing like it either in sacred or profane history. His career was like that of some mighty comet: bold, eccentric, and producing the most signal events. God has been pleased to give it a place in those lively oracles, which are profitable either for doctrines reproof, or instruction in righteousness.

Let us notice,

I. *The leading Events in his History.*

II. *The more striking Features of his Personal Character.*

III. *As the Subject both of the Divine Judgment and Mercy.*

Let us consider,

I. *The leading Events in his History.*

Nebuchadnezzar was the son of Nabopollassar, and succeeded that monarch in the government of Chaldea, in the year of the world 3399.

He attacked and overcame Jehoiakim robbed him of his treasures, and afterwards subdued and destroyed him. 2 Kings xxiv. 1.

He also took Zedekiah captive, put out his eyes, and bound him in chains, after having put his sons to death in his presence.

He plundered Jerusalem of its riches. The vessels of the temple he placed in the temples of his idols at Babylon. His kingdom was celebrated for its riches and magnificence, and his conquests were altogether unprecedented, and almost innumerable. He also took Egypt, with its immense spoils, and brought great numbers of its celebrated personages captive to Babylon.

It is generally supposed, that during the peace which followed, he expended incalculable sums of money in adorning Babylon with magnificent buildings; and erected the famous hanging gardens, one of the wonders of the world.

At this time he became the subject of a very astonishing dream, which the diviners could not possibly interpret. At length Daniel gave the interpretation. Dan. ii 1, &c.

Afterwards he had another dream, which Daniel again interpreted; one exceedingly ominous and terrific. See Dan. iv. 19, &c

Let us notice.

II. *The more striking Features of his Personal Character.*

1. He was a public notorious idolater.

Yea, he was a maker and patronizer of dols. Hence the image on the plain of Dura. Dan. iii. 1.

Consider the inexcusable folly and infatuation of idolatry. Paying divine honors to a mere senseless image.

2. He was noted for his relentless cruelty.

Case of Zedekiah. 2 Kings xxv. 7. Also casting into the fiery furnace the Hebrew children. Dan. iii. 22.

3. He was distinguished for his insatiable ambition.

He was constantly a man of war and blood.

4. He was also proud, haughty, and impious.

Hence his language respecting his gods. Dan. iii. 14, &c. His impious address, "Is not this great Babylon that I have built," &c., iv. 30.

Let us consider him,

III. *As the Subject both of the Divine Judgment and Mercy.*

God brought his judgments upon him. His affliction,

1. Was insanity.

Reason dethroned. Became brutish; herded with the cattle, &c His affliction,

2. Was divine.

God entered into the lists with him. He whom he had despised and contemned direct from heaven. Impress of God's seal upon it.

3. It was severe.

Loss of property; of friends; of health; reputation, &c., often distressing. But Nebuchadnezzar was hurled from the lofty pinnacle of worldly grandeur and glory, down to a level with the brutes. Driven from his palace, and from human society. Incapable of reflection; degraded, and wretched indeed.

4. It was singularly appropriate to his crimes.

He made himself as God; God made him as a brute. He boasted of his glory; God made him utterly despicable. He had adored his reason, and worshipped the work of his own hands; God removed from him the one, and banished him from the other. He made humanity sick with his cruel oppressions, and humanity is freed from his presence But it was,

5. Limited and followed by Divine mercy.

Had it not, he would have been utterly consumed. God's mercy did not utterly forsake him. He turned back his captivity restored all his blessings, &c.

God's judgments,

6. Produced reformation.

Hence he blessed God; and praised and honored him that liveth forever. Confessed God's works and ways to be truth and judgment, &c. &c. Dan. iv. 36. It is highly probable that he was a sincere penitent, and recipient of the Divine mercy; and, as we have no account of a relapse into sin, we hope that he swells the lists of the Manassehs and Magdalens who in like manner were plucked as brands from the burning.

APPLICATION.

Learn,

1. The universal government of God.

He ruleth over all. His empire comprehends all creatures, from the insect to the highest angel in the Divine presence. None too great to be exempt from his surveyance and control.

2. The wickedness of pride.

Pride, of every sort, is exceedingly hateful to God. Pride of person, genius, riches, &c. It expelled angels from heaven. One principal ingredient in our first parents' crime. Ruined Haman. Caused Herod to be eaten up with worms, &c. &c.

3. The greatness of Divine mercy.

In the midst of wrath he remembered mercy.

> Lord, when I count thy mercies o'er,
> They strike me with surprise:
> Not all the sands that spread the shore
> To equal numbers rise.

4. The importance of the Divine favor.

His frown is death; his favor better than life. Only obtained by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the medium and channel of the Divine mercy.

SKETCH LXXXIII

STEADFASTNESS IN THE CHRISTIAN PROFESSION.

"Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering, for he is faithful that promised."—*Heb.* x. 23.

THE apostle had been referring to the sacrificial work of Jesus, in opening a way

by which we might have boldness of access unto the holiest of all, consecrated for us by his precious blood. He then directs us how we are to draw near to God by this way, viz. with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, with hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and bodies washed with pure water. Then he urges the necessity of steadfastness in the Christian profession, Let us hold fast," &c.

Let us consider,

I. *The Profession referred to.*

He calls it "the profession of our faith." It is the obvious exhibition of our faith in the gospel, and our attachment and obedience to the Lord Jesus Christ.

This profession is,

1. Put on when we become the members of his visible church.

The possession of religion is clearly supposed. But more than this is required; we must let our lights shine; as salt,—the savor of our piety must be spread abroad. We must unite with his people; be called by his name, rally round his cross, and be devoted to his glory. We must be his witnesses and confessors in the world. Living epistles, read and known of all men. The members of the first church at Jerusalem, heard, believed, were baptized, and then continued steadfastly in the ordinances of Christ.

2. This profession is one part of religion itself.

It is directly enjoined by the head of the church. We are called to follow him who publicly honored his heavenly Father. He has said that they who are ashamed to confess him, of them he will also be ashamed. "If a man will be my disciple, let him take up his cross and follow me."

3. This profession will expose to difficulties and sufferings.

There will be,

(1) The assaults of Satan. This profession is a declaration of war with him. He will come as a flood to overwhelm us. Direct his fiery darts, &c. Sift us as he did Peter, &c.

There will also be,

(2) The opposition of the world. World is at enmity with God and all his people. Hated Christ, and will hate all his sincere followers. In the world must have tribulation.

There will also be,

(3) The indisposition of our own hearts. Weakness; indolence; self-love; unbelief; unwatchfulness; &c.

Notice then,

II. *The Duty enjoined.*

This profession must be held fast, &c.

This implies,

1. That there must be decision of character.

We must not be halting between two opinions. Not half-hearted. All our powers must be surrendered to God. The entire surrender of the whole man. The heart fully on the Lord's side.

2. There must be constancy of spirit.

Heart established, mind fixed, soul stayed upon God. Constant in duties; especially prayer, praise, reading the Divine word, &c. Always setting the Lord before us, &c Not as the morning cloud and early dew, &c

3. There must be perseverance in practice.

We only retain our hold by pressing onwards, &c. We must be found walking in the Lord's testimonies; running the appointed race; warring; striving; being diligent; and abounding more and more in the work of the Lord. Not weary, but faithful unto death.

4. In short, we must hold fast our profession.

(1) By the exercise of vigorous faith.

(2) By the constraining influence of Christ's love.

(3) By the cheering attractions of a lively hope.

(4) By the supporting and staying effects of holy patience; and,

(5) By the continual use of all the appointed means of grace.

Let us consider,

III. *Some Motives by which this Duty may be enforced.*

Love to Jesus is a powerful motive Gratitude for past mercies. Our present happiness, and our prospect of eternal felicity. But there is one which the text supplies: "For he is faithful that promised." Christ's faithfulness is here laid down as the great motive.

1. He has promised to give us grace to hold fast our profession; and "he is faithful."

"My grace is sufficient for thee." To cheer, to direct, to keep, to uphold, and to save to eternal life. He will never leave, &c. Supply all our need, &c. Sun and shield; give grace, and glory &c.

2. He has promised to acknowledge our profession; and "he is faithful."

He has said, "He will confess us;" acknowledge all we do and suffer for his sake, &c. Not forget a cup of water given to one of his disciples.

3. He has promised to reward our profession; and "he is faithful."

He has promised that we shall reap according as we sow; that we shall receive a hundred-fold, and life everlasting; an unchanging inheritance; an unfading crown; a glorious throne, and an everlasting kingdom; fulness of joy for evermore. Our labors shall be rewarded with rest; our warfare with celestial triumph; and our sufferings with an eternal weight of glory. And "he is faithful." Nothing can change his mind; nothing can frustrate his counsels; nothing can cause him to violate his word. His throne and his glory rest upon the basis of his faithfulness. If this failed, heaven and earth would be involved in one common ruin.

> "To patient faith the prize is sure,
> And all that to the end endure
> The cross, shall wear the crown."

APPLICATION.

1. Learn that religion requires both the devotion of the heart, and the profession of the life.

2. The way to heaven is associated with conflicts.

3. Steadfastness is essential to our final salvation.

4. God has provided abundant resources for our comfort and safety.

5. The end will amply recompense for the trials of the way.

SKETCH LXXXIV.

MUTUAL CHRISTIAN DUTIES

"And let us consider one another, to provoke unto love and to good works."—*Heb.* x. 24.

THE apostle having urged the believing Hebrews to constancy in their public Christian profession, now enjoins some duties which they owe to each other; especially mutual consideration and affectionate provocation. "And let us consider one another," &c.

Let us,

I. *Explain and Illustrate.* And

II. *Enforce the Duties specified in the Text.*

Let us,

I. *Explain and Illustrate the Duties in the Text.*

The first of these is,

1. Mutual consideration.

"Let us consider one another.' Consideration is often enjoined upon us in the divine word. We are called to "consider our ways," to "consider our latter end," to "consider the wondrous works of God,' and to "consider Christ the Apostle and High-Priest of our profession." But in the text we are directed to consider our Christian brethren.

We should consider them,

(1) In the frailties of our common nature.

We should remember the best of our brethren are but frail, erring creatures. "In many things we all offend." "If we say that we have no sin," &c. The Lord "knoweth our frame, he remembers that we are dust." This would check self esteem, prevent a spirit of censoriousness, cause us to bear and forbear, and increase that true charity that covereth a multitude of sins.

(2) In the oneness of our calling as saints.

We are all members of one body, of which Christ is the head. Here there is mutual dependence. Here one member cannot say to another, I have no need of thee, for we have all need of each other. Riches, talents, learning, graces, influence, do not affect the oneness of our calling. We have all one Father, one Divine Redeemer, one Holy Spirit, one new nature, one gospel, are members of one mystical body, and heirs of one heavenly and eternal inheritance.

A consideration of this should lead to mutual confidence, respect, and complacency. "In honor preferring one another." We should consider one another,

(3) In our common exposedness to afflictions and dangers.

As we have mutual privileges, so have we also mutual enemies and conflicts. All saints have the same common adversaries Satan, the world, and the remains of the carnal mind. Fightings without, and fears within, losses, afflictions of body, bereavements, persecutions, &c., the common lot of the followers of Christ

A consideration of this should produce a spirit of kindness and sympathy. To encourage and pray for each other, &c. Bear one another's burdens, &c.

(4) In our reciprocal duties both to the church and to the world.

In the human body, every member and part has its specific function—none without then use; so in the body of Christ's church every one must be an eye, or ear, or foot, or hand, &c. Jesus says to every one of his servants, "Go and work in my vineyard;" and there is work both in the church and in the world for every true disciple of Christ. Indolence is not only injurious to ourselves, but must retard the work of our blessed Lord. 1 Cor. xii. 1–31; Eph. iv. 7–16. We must consider one another,

(5) In the prospect of our eternal fellowship in the heavenly world.

We are all strangers and pilgrims on the earth,

> "Travelling through Immanuel's land,
> To fairer worlds on high."

We are looking for the same mercy, and appearing of the Lord Jesus Christ. We expect all to meet in heaven. But one haven for all who are sailing under the pilotage of Jesus. How kind and affectionate, then, should we be to each other; treat each other as the heirs of glory, and as we shall wish we had done when we meet in our Father's house.

This leads us to consider the other duty stated in the text, viz.,

2. That of affectionate provocation.

"To provoke one another to love and good works." To provoke or excite, not to jealousy, or anger, or bitterness of spirit, but to love and good works.

(1) To greater love to God. Who demands our supreme affections, our undivided hearts.

(2) To greater love to each other. For we must love each other even as Christ loved us. And,

(3) To greater love to a dying world. For whom the Redeemer died, and to whom the gospel tidings must be constantly proclaimed.

We must provoke one another also,

(4) To good works. Works of piety, justice, &c., but especially works of benevolence; to do good by communicating to the poor, and wretched, and miserable, and perishing; works of piety, compassion and genuine Christian philanthropy. Matt. v. 7; Jas. i. 27; Heb. xiii. 16; Psalm xxxvii. 3.

Now we must thus provoke our brethren,

(1) By our own example.

(2) By affectionate exhortation. And,

(3) By fervent prayer with and for each other.

Let us, then,

II. *Enforce the Duties specified in the Text.*

We should consider one another to provoke, &c.

1. Because of our liability to lukewarmness and indifference.

This arises from our peculiar temperaments, habits, weaknesses, temptations, &c. Best are in danger of becoming cold and formal. Galatians, Laodiceans, &c.

2. Because love and good works are essential to genuine godliness.

Love is the soul, the vital part of true religion. If our hearts have been made good, good works must necessarily be the result. A good tree, &c. A pure fountain, &c. Without these a name is worthless. Profession, talents, &c., all are vain. 1 Cor. xiii. 1–3; 1 John iv. 7–12.

3. Because, if we abound in these, our usefulness and happiness must be greatly extended.

Love is the only spirit which will constrain us to live entirely for God, and the good of our fellow-men. Yes, the love of Christ must constrain us, and then we shall bear fruit to the glory of God, and abound in works of goodness and compassion to mankind. And as we dwell in love, and are exercised in good works, will our peace and joy increase yet more and more.

4. Because, in proportion to these will be our rewards in the heavenly state.

See Matt. xxv. 20–23, and especially 34 ver. to end. But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again, and *your reward* shall be great Luke vi. 35; Matt. x. 27

APPLICATION.

1. We learn the true spirit which should dwell among Christ's disciples.

2. The necessity of mutual excitement to the cultivation of that spirit, and the works it produces

3. How many display the very opposite spirit, and are lamentably barren of good works.

SKETCH LXXXV

IMPORTANCE OF PUBLIC WORSHIP, &c.

"Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is, but exhorting *one another*, and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching."—*Heb.* x. 25.

THE apostle having exhorted believers to steadfastness in their profession, and to mutual consideration and affectionate provocation, he now admonishes them to avoid an evil, into which some had fallen, viz. that of neglecting the assemblies of the saints, and to this he annexes the necessity of spiritual exhortation, and so much the more as they saw the day approaching.

The text contains,

I. *An Admonition.*

II. *A Duty.* And,

III. *Supplies a powerful Motive.*

Notice,

I *The Admonition given.* "Not to forsake the assembling," &c.

From this admonition it is manifest,

1. That to assemble together is a Christian duty.

Old Testament saints did so. Ancient rural altars. Tabernacle. Afterwards temple. Christ frequented the synagogues and temple, Luke iv. 16. Christ's disciples were thus assembled when Jesus appeared to them after his resurrection. Also they were thus assembled at the day of Pentecost. Paul waited at Troas until the brethren came together, Acts xx. 5–7. This duty is clearly implied in that promise, "Where two or three are met," &c. And obviously in the text. Notice,

2. Some who profess attachment to Christ's cause neglect this duty.

"As the manner of some is." We do not wonder that infidels, the profane, and worldlings should do so. But many who are Christians by profession are also guilty of this. Some are once-a-day worshippers; all their services are crowded within little more than an hour; the rest of the day devoted to pleasure, &c. Others are fine-weather worshippers; while many are merely fancy-worshippers, and go to the Lord's house just when it may please them. Great reason is obvious, no spiritual relish, only a name to live, &c. Only form of godliness, &c.

3. That it is of the utmost importance that we do not thus forsake the assembly of ourselves together.

(1) On God's account, who demands and infinitely deserves our service. We meet in his house, we read his word, declare his gospel, sing his praise, &c. In forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, we pour contempt on all these God is a jealous God.

(2) On the church's account. The church is to be visible. A visible building; all the stones united together. A city—a family—a flock—an army. This can only be by the real and public union of the Lord's people, and is effected by their assembling together. To neglect this, therefore, is to weaken her energies, to sadden the hearts, and cause the hands of the pious to hang down.

(3) We ought "not to forsake,' &c Especially on our own account. We are deeply interested in these assemblies. Our holiness, comfort, and usefulness are identified with them. God can dispense with us and all our engagements, but we cannot. Our knowledge is yet imperfect—our faith feeble—our hope clouded—our love languid—our graces weakly. We might "forsake," &c., if we had no mercies to acknowledge—no sins to confess—no blessings to crave—no enemies to overcome—no soul to sanctify—no hell to escape—no heaven to gain.

Observe in the text,

II. *A specific Duty stated.* "But exhorting one another."

Our mutual presence in the Lord's house is a silent, yet powerful exhortation of itself. But the text shows that we are to feel deeply interested in each other's welfare, and hence avail ourselves of our public meetings to exhort each other, &c.

We should exhort each other.

1. To watchfulness and vigilance

"Be sober," &c. "Watch ye, stand fast." "Let us not sleep," &c. "Be ye also ready."

2. To determination and constancy.

Our condition, and enemies, and duties all require this. "Be strong," &c. "Hold fast the profession," &c. "Be not moved,' &c. "Hold fast that which thou hast,' &c

3. To zeal and diligence.

"That we abound yet more and more," &c. "Sow plentifully." "Give all diligence," &c. "It is good to be zealously affected," &c.

4. To courage and perseverance.

"Be of good courage," &c. "Be faithful unto death," &c. "War a good warfare," &c. "Fight the good fight," &c. Now we must exhort each other; all stand in need of it, however profoundly learned, highly gifted; however extensive our knowledge, experience, or rich in graces, we all stand in need of exhortation. And, in exhorting each other, we must do it with all *faithfulness*, *affection*, and with much *prayer*

Observe the text,

III. *Supplies a Powerful Motive.* "As ye see the day approaching."

Doubtless referring literally to the day of the destruction of Jerusalem, when the disciples would be exposed to the calamities predicted by the Saviour, Matt. xxiv., and be scattered and persecuted over the face of the world.

At the time this epistle was written, that day was very near, and the disciples were watching for it. The day of death is before us. A day which will close our probation, terminate our scene of labor, and end all our privileges.

1. The day is approaching.

Our years, and months, and weeks roll round, and every one is bringing us nearer to the eternal world. It cannot be far from any, and it may be most awfully near to some. It is approaching, and will surely not tarry.

2. This day is truly a momentous one.

Then ends all connection with earth and men; with the means of grace and Christian fellowship on earth. Then summer is ended, and harvest past. No throne of grace or preached gospel beyond. All fixed and eternal.

3. The believer sees the day approaching.

That is, he never loses sight of that truth. He acts in reference to it. In prayer he seeks a meetness for its solemn results. He watches for that day; believes, and lives with it before him.

APPLICATION.

Learn,

1 The place of the Christian's delight will be God's house. His heart is there, and he rejoices to go up to the house of the Lord. He cannot, without violence to his soul, "forsake," &c.

2. From our present circumstances, we all stand in need of exhortation. See 1 Thess. v. 11; 2 Tim. iv. 2; Heb. iii. 13

3. We cannot fail to be stimulated, both to diligence and to faithfulness, if we keep the truth before us—that the day is approaching.

SKETCH LXXXVI

THE LAMB OF GOD.

"Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world."—*John* i. 29.

It had long been predicted that a harbinger should be sent to prepare the way of the Lord. That harbinger was John; hence, when the people were anxious to treat him as the Messiah, he said that he was not the Christ, "But as the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord," &c. The very next day after this, John, seeing Jesus, said unto them, "Behold the Lamb of God," &c.

Let us consider,

The Title,—the Work,—and the Attention which Christ demands.

I. *The Title given to Jesus.*—"The Lamb of God."

1. Jesus was distinguished for those things which the Lamb is supposed to exhibit.

The Lamb is the emblem,

(1) Of innocency. Now Jesus was free from all guilt and all guile. His nature was spotless; his life perfect; his conduct unblameable. He had not one sinful weakness or infirmity. The Lamb is also the emblem,

(2) Of meekness and patience. How these were displayed through his whole life. They railed at him, despised him mocked him, insulted him, and heaped all cruel indignities upon him; yet he endured the contradiction of sinners against himself. This had been predicted: "He is led as a lamb to the slaughter," &c. Before the priests, before Pilate, in Herod's court, on the cross, how he exemplified the meekness and patience of the lamb He may be likened to the Lamb

(3) For usefulness. No creature more useful than the lamb. Its flesh is meat, and its wool raiment to us. So Jesus says, His flesh is meat indeed, and his blood is drink indeed. He also provides for us the best robe, the wedding raiment, the garment of salvation.

2. As a Lamb, Jesus had been typified both by the paschal Lamb, and the daily sacrifices.

The paschal Lamb especially had respect to him. In its being without spot and blemish; in its being a year old; in its being taken out of the fold; in its being set apart four days; in its being slain in the midst of the assembly; in not a bone being broken; in being roasted with fire; in its blood delivering from the destroying angel. Jesus was holy—in the perfection of life. Was selected by God for the purpose. Was set apart in the promise four thousand years before his death, and entered Jerusalem four days before he was crucified—was slain in the midst of the assembly of Israel. Not a bone of him was broken. He endured the scorching rays of the Divine dispensation;—and in his blood we have redemption from the wrath to come.

3. Jesus is the Lamb of God.

His, in a peculiar sense; his only-begotten Son; his essential co-equal; his in a higher sense than angels are his creatures; his selecting; his sending; for whom he prepared a body, whom he delivered up, and whose sacrifice he accepted—his to the exclusion of every other.

Notice,

II. *The Work of Jesus.* "Taketh away the sins of the world."

1. By his obedience and death he took away the curse of sin from the world.

Whole world guilty, wretched, helpless, and condemned. Threatening of death gone forth. Jesus magnified the law in his life, and endured the curse, by being made a curse for us. By his voluntary sacrifice he bore our sins in his own body on the tree. Hence, for this he was born, and lived, and died, that he might suffer, the just for the unjust, to bring us to God. Hence it is written that "Christ gave himself for us," Tit. ii. 4. That he "redeemed us to God by his blood," Rev. v 9. "In whom we have redemption," &c. Eph. i. 7. "He appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself," Heb ix 26. "He was manifested to take away our sins," 1 John iii. 5. And he did this for the world. See 1 John ii. 2, and iv 14; also 1 Tim. ii. 3–6.

2. He takes away the guilt of sin by his justifying grace.

Hence the Gospel which announces redemption through his blood, offers to us justification and forgiveness of sin, on condition of receiving the record given of Christ, by faith. By believing in him we are justified freely from all things, and all our sins are blotted out. Rom. iii. 24; Isa. liii.

3. He takes away the pollution of sin, by his Spirit and blood.

His Spirit, by the application of his blood to our conscience, cleanseth us from all sin. Hence we are sanctified by his blood, and thus wash our robes and obtain a meetness for celestial and eternal glory: "That he might sanctify the people with his own blood," Heb. xii. 24.

III. *The Attention Christ demands*—"Behold," &c.

We cannot behold him as John desired the Jews to do. He is now removed into the holiest place, &c. To sense invisible, but we may yet obey the spirit of this direction, we should

Behold Jesus, the Lamb of God,

1. In the mystery of his incarnation.

How low he stooped; how he humbled himself, &c.; and how wonderful the constitution of his person. The child born, son given, Immanuel, God with us.

2. Behold him in the wonders of his life.

A holy life—a life of sorrow and self-denial, of suffering and reproach, yet of miracles, of mercy, and grace.

3. Behold him in the overwhelming agonies of Gethsemane.

Giving his soul an offering for sin Drinking the inexplicably bitter cup. Sorrowful unto death, &c.

4. Behold him in the sufferings and ignominy of the cross.

Dragged to Calvary's summit, and there crucified between two thieves. Dying amid the darkness of the heavens, shaking of the earth, rending of rocks, &c.

5. Behold him in his resurrection from the tomb.

Once dead but alive again, and for ever more. The plague of death, the spoiler

of the grave, and the resurrection and the life.

6. Behold him on his mediatorial throne.

The toil exchanged for rest; the sufferings, for glory; the cross, for his Father's right hand. John beheld him, and said, "And I beheld, and lo, in the midst," &c. Rev. v. 6.

And how should we behold him?

1. With reverence and humility.

"Great is the mystery," &c. Isaiah cried, "Wo is me, for I have seen the king," &c. Angels desire to look into these things, &c. The hosts of heaven bow profoundly before him.

2. Behold him with shame and contrition.

Our sins brought him from heaven; tried him; put him to death, &c. "They shall look on him whom they have pierced," &c. Zech. xii. 1. The Jews who heard Peter were goaded, &c.

3. Behold him with the eye of faith.

He says, "Look unto me," &c. "As Moses lifted up," &c. "If I be lifted up," &c.

4. Behold with devout thankfulness.

"Thanks be to God for his unspeakable gift."

5 Behold him with supreme affection and delight.

"Were the whole realms of nature mine,
That were a present far too small;
Love so amazing, so divine,
Demands my heart, my life, my all."

APPLICATION.

1. Urge all classes of sinners to behold the Lamb of God.

2. The whole world will behold him at the last day.

3. The saints shall behold him in glory forever.

SKETCH LXXXVII.

THE LOVING-KINDNESS OF GOD.

"Because thy loving-kindness is better than life, my lips shall praise thee."—*Psalm* lxiii. 3

AFFLICTIONS are not only profitable to those who are exercised with them, but also to the church of God in general. How many bright examples have they furnished! How many instances of God's care and goodness have they exhibited! How many proofs hav they furnished of the consoling influences of genuine religion! Thousands have been instructed and edified by those precious Psalms which David composed while suffering affliction. In the psalm which contains the text there is a beautiful manifestation of experimental piety. He was now deprived of the means of grace, but his soul was entirely fixed upon God. And he longed to have fellowship with him and his people again, ver. 2. Our text is the grateful exultation of his heart in God. "Because thy loving-kindness," &c.

Notice,

I. *The Blessing acknowledged.* "God's loving-kindness."

II. *Its Superlative Value.* "Better than life."

III. *Its grateful Influence.* "Because &c., my lips shall praise thee."

I. *The Blessing acknowledged.* "Thy loving-kindness."

The term is a compound one, signifying love in its outgoings of kindness. Not love as an abstract principle, but love as a lively vigorous cause, producing the kindest effects. Kindness, not the result of mere esteem, or arising out of the propriety of things, but kindness flowing from intensity of affection, the ardent actings of love. The term was a favorite one with the psalmist, who employs it about twenty-two times; Jeremiah uses it four times; Hosea once. The loving-kindness of God to us was displayed,

1. In the gift of Jesus to our ruined world.

Paul speaks of God's "kindness towards us through Christ Jesus," Eph. ii. 7. Now the provision of Jesus is the great basis of all the goodness of God towards us. This is the channel which his infinite mercy opened for the bestowment of every blessing, both spiritual and eternal. Hence reasons the apostle: "If God spared not," &c. Rom. viii. 31. He blesses us with all "spiritual blessings in heavenly places, in Christ," Eph. i. 3. God's loving-kindness,

2. Is displayed in his forgiving mercy and saving grace.

Hence the psalmist pleads, "Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy loving-kindness," Psalm li. 1. He prays also, "Hear me, and turn me; for thy loving-kindness is good," lxix. 16. God also promises, "that with everlasting kindness he

will have mercy on his people," Isa. liv. 8. God's loving-kindness,

3. Is displayed in his kind dealings with those who love him.

"As a father pitieth," &c. Psalm ciii. 13, 14. He supplies all their wants; directs all their steps; orders all their ways; preserves, delivers, keeps, comforts, gives grace; he is their shield, and withholds no good thing.

4. In his visits of kindness.

"What is man," &c. Temple visits—family visits—closet visits. His visits are holy, enlivening, comforting.

God's loving-kindness is also exhibited,

5. In his kind promises.

The psalmist exclaims, "O, how great is thy goodness which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee," Psalm xxxi. 19. Hence he makes unto us great and precious promises, &c. Promises of all that we can possibly need either in life, death, or eternity. Promises free, munificent, exhaustless, and everlasting.

Let us notice, in reference to the loving-kindness of God,

II. *Its superlative Value.* "Better than life."

Here it is implied,

1. That life is valuable.

Gold and silver are so. Knowledge and dignity are greatly prized. Health and reputation are exceedingly precious. But life is still more so. As such, God has implanted very deeply in our hearts the love of life. Men will make any sacrifices to prolong it. Every other temporal thing is worthless contrasted with it. It is the gift of God. God has set a high price upon it. Although Satan was permitted to afflict the patriarch Job in his estate, family, and health, yet he was not allowed to "touch his life." God is the only rightful Disposer of life. Life is the seed-time for eternity; the period of man's probation for the eternal state. Yet the loving-kindness of God is,

2. More valuable than life.

"Better than life."

(1) It is so in point of priority. It is before life, as our life is the first expression of God's loving-kindness to us. His loving-kindness prepared the way for my existence, fashioned me in the womb, endued me with intellectual faculties, and at last gives me birth itself. And this loving-kindness, considered in reference to redemption, existed in the compassionate counsels of God before time itself began to roll its course.

(2) It is the *support* of life. He supplies all those mercies necessary to its preservation and its continuance. Bread, water, air, &c. His mercies new every morning, and fresh every evening. He preserves the life of every living thing.

(3) It is the *joy* and *felicity* of life. Mere existence has no charms. We may have life, and yet be totally wretched. Remove all connected with the Lord's loving-kindness, and we shall be miserable indeed. It is this irradiates life, sweetens life, renders it happy under all circumstances.

(4) It *blesses* the blessings of life. It makes every portion as large as Benjamin's. All insipid without it. Every thing doubly blessed with his loving-kindness.

(5) It sanctifies the *adversities* and *sorrows* of life. "If God be for us," &c. "All things work," &c. "These light afflictions," &c. Joseph in prison—David in exile—Daniel in the den—three Hebrews in the fire—Paul and Silas in the dungeon—John in the isle of Patmos.

(6) It is more *endurable* than life. Life is a vapor, a thing of naught; but the loving-kindness of God changes not; cannot be exhausted; will be our comfort in affliction, our life in death, and our portion forever. Isa. liv. 10.

Notice, then,

III. *Its grateful Influence*

"Because thy loving-kindness is better than life, my lips shall praise thee."

This praise would be,

1. The overflowing of a thankful heart.

"Bless the Lord, O my soul," &c

"What shall I render," &c.

This praise would,

2. Form the expression of the lips.

From the fulness of the heart the mouth speaketh. God requires both. Highest employment of man to bless and praise God.

This praise,

3. Should be constantly given to God

We are daily the recipients of his goodness. We should therefore praise him while he lends us breath: in public, secret, family altar, &c.

4. This praise will be perpetuated through eternity.

"While life, or thought, or being last,
Or immortality endures"

APPLICATION.

1 Highly prize and estimate,
2 Extol and celebrate, and,
3 Recommend the loving-kindness of the Lord.

SKETCH LXXXVIII.

THE PRECIOUSNESS OF FAITH.

"Precious faith."—2 *Pet.* i. 1.

FAITH is the sincere and hearty credence of testimony. The faith referred to in the text is clearly the belief of the Gospel, by which Jesus is received into the soul, as the only Saviour from guilt, condemnation, and the wrath to come. Faith is not only an important grace in religion, but it is the very foundation of it, and there cannot be genuine and evangelical piety without it. The apostle directs our attention to its preciousness.

I. *Faith is precious in its Object.*

That object is the Lord Jesus Christ. Who can tell the preciousness of the blessed Redeemer? In the dignity of his person he is higher than the loftiest seraph in the skies. He is the Son of the Most High. The incarnate Deity. Jehovah-Jesus. Immanuel, God with us; the Creator of the universe; the Ruler of worlds; the Upholder of all things; the terror of devils, the benefactor of earth, and the joy of heaven. No language can describe, no imagination conceive, the height of his dignity and glories. And he is the only object of faith. We may hearken to Moses, sit in the school of the prophets, and joyfully receive the tidings of apostles and evangelists; but we are only called to believe in the name of the Son of God.

II. *Faith is precious in its Testimony.*

The testimony which faith receives is the glorious Gospel of the blessed God. The value of this testimony is incalculable. It is the word of truth The word of life. The word of salvation. It reveals tidings divine, heavenly, and eternal. More precious than thousands of gold and silver. One single verse of this is worth more than all the books extant. 'This is a faithful saying," &c.

III. *Faith is precious in its benefits.*

By faith,

1. We are justified.

"Being justified by faith," &c. Rom v. 1. "By him all that believe are justified," Acts xiii. 39; Rom. iii. 21-26

By faith,

2. We are adopted into the Divine family.

"Ye are all the children of God by faith," Gal. iii. 26. "To as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God," &c. John i. 12.

By faith,

3. We are sanctified.

"Sanctify them through thy truth," &c John xvii. 17. Now it is only the truth received by faith that benefits us. Blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin, but that blood must be the object of our faith. "Purifying their hearts by faith," Acts xv. 9.

By faith,

4. We obtain complete and eternal salvation.

"Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls," 1 Pet. i. 9. "Kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation," 1 Pet. i. 5. Believers, says John, know that "they have eternal life," 1 John v. 3.

IV. *Faith is precious in its Influences.*

Faith produces,

1. A living spiritual influence.

"He that believeth, though he were dead, yet shall he live," John xi. 26. "The just shall live by faith." "The life that we live in the flesh is a life of faith in the Son of God," Gal. ii. 20. Faith feeds upon the bread of life; draws from the wells of salvation the water of life; inhales the breath of life.

Faith produces,

2. A comforting influence.

"I had fainted unless I had believed," &c. "Let not your heart be troubled; ye believe in God, believe also in me," &c. "The God of hope fill you with all joy and peace through believing," 1 Cor. xv. 12. 1 Pet. i. 18.

Faith produces,

3. An enriching influence.

Who can describe the extent and preciousness of the Divine promises? yet they are all yea and amen to them that believe. By faith Christ's unsearchable riches, both of grace and glory, are ours By faith we are heirs of God, and joint heirs with Jesus Christ.

Faith produces.

4. An establishing and conquering influence.

We stand by faith. Hold fast our profession by faith. Endure by faith. Gain the spiritual victory by faith,—over the flesh, by being crucified with Christ,—Over the world, "This is the victory," &c. 1 John v. 4,—Over the devil, "Shield of faith by which we quench," &c. Eph. vi 16.

In death faith produces,

5. A joyous triumphing influence.

Cannot die happily or safely but by dying in the faith. Faith must realize the glories of eternity, and bring them near to our souls. Faith must realize the virtue of Christ's atoning sacrifice, and rest upon it. Faith must then realize the presence of Christ, and exult in it. "O death, where is thy sting," &c

Faith produces,

6. A meetening influence for eternal glory.

We cannot be acceptable to God without faith. We cannot enter heaven unless we are savingly united to Christ and accepted of him. This is effected by faith. Faith receives the ring of reconciliation; puts on the wedding-garment; receives Jesus into the heart, "who is the true God, and eternal life." He who hath Christ, hath life, life now, and life for evermore. How indescribably precious, then, is faith! More precious than gold, or rubies, or dignities, or health, or even life itself. Precious under all circumstances, at all times, living or dying, in time and eternity

APPLICATION.

This subject should excite us,

1. To careful examination. Have we this genuine faith? This faith that justifies, adopts, &c.? That produces such happy influences upon us?

2. Faith admits of increase. It is the will of God that it should grow. To effect this let us cultivate a close walk with God. Often peruse the sacred records. Be diligent in the means of grace, and continue instant in prayer.

3. Strong faith will be productive of solid peace and growing spiritual enjoyments. It will ever be to us according to our faith. Strong faith will give much glory to God, magnify Jesus, and greatly add to the usefulness and holiness of the Christian character.

SKETCH LXXXIX

GOD'S PRESENCE AND REST

"My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest."—*Exod.* xxxiii. 14

We cannot read the history of the Israelites without being instructed and admonished. In many things we may discern a resemblance between their condition and ours. And, while we feel disposed to censure their murmurings and unbelief, let us take heed, lest there be in us a heart of unbelief in departing from the living God God's goodness and mercy towards them is highly calculated to inspire us with love to him, and confidence in him. Notwithstanding all their sins, when they supplicated his mercy, he turned his anger away, and blessed them. Moses had been fervently interceding for God to show him his way, and to be gracious to his people. And he said, "My presence shall go with thee," &c

Observe,

The Journey—the Presence—the Rest.

I. *The Journey.*

The people were in a journeying condition.

1. They had come from Egypt.

A land of toil, and oppression, and misery. God had pitied, and called them out of it. He had made bare his arm in their deliverance, and, by signs and wonders, had led them from beneath the yoke of the oppressor. How characteristic of the original state of God's people! Far from God. In Egyptian darkness and bondage. Under the tyranny of the devil. God called them by his Gospel, and delivered them by his gracious arm from the power of the adversary.

2. They were journeying in the wilderness.

A land of drought, sterility, and dangers. They had many privations, trials, difficulties, and enemies. A true picture of the world through which believers are travelling. The world is a dreary desert; a scene of conflicts, trials, and dangers "In the world ye shall have tribulation" &c

3. They were travelling to Canaan.

A land promised to their fathers; a land of freedom and rest, of plenty and happiness. The joy of all lands. Believers, too, are journeying to the land promised —the heavenly Canaan. A country promised to all who love and fear God; a country purchased and prepared by Jesus as the inheritance of his saints. A world of rest, and celestial glory. The kingdom of God. The land of infinite delights. To this the eye of the Christian is looking. For this he prays, and believes, and fights.

"From Egypt lately come,
Where death and darkness reign,
We seek our new and better home
Where we our rest shall gain.

"There, in celestial strains,
Enraptured myriads sing;
There love in every bosom reigns,
For God himself is King."

Notice,

II. *The Presence*

"My presence shall go with thee."

This presence,

1. Was Divine.

"My presence," &c. God gave them Moses to lead them; Aaron to minister to them; Joshua and Caleb, &c. His angels also are employed for his people. But still there is something more than these desirable—something with these, and that is the *Divine* presence. This presence included, that almighty power—infinite wisdom—exhaustless goodness—and unchanging all-sufficiency should be with them. "If God be for us," &c. "Fear not, I am with thee," &c. "Lo, I am with you," &c "The Lord will not forsake," &c.

2. It was visible

Pillar of cloud by day, and pillar of fire by night. Not now visible to the eye of sense. No literal sign of the Divine presence: yet still God is really with us and we have demonstrative evidences of it. The influences exerted, the changes wrought, the comforts enjoyed, and the blessings experienced, all evidence that "the Lord of Hosts is with us."

3. It was efficient.

Not merely Divine recognition and observation, but with them to do all for them they required. They required direction, provision, preservation &c. And he did guide, supplied all their wants, and delivered them from all their enemies. He has engaged "to guide us by his counsel," &c. "To lead us to a city," &c. To keep us, supply all our need, and save unto eternal life. "The Lord God is a sun," &c.

4. It was continued.

Through the whole desert, to Jordan's streams, and until they had entered into Canaan. So it will be with us in health and sickness, in youth and old age, in life and death, never leave, &c. "When flesh and heart fail," &c. "This God is our God forever and ever," &c.

Notice, then,

III. *The Rest.*

"And I will give thee rest."

1. The rest of triumph after the conflicts of life.

The conqueror shall sit down with Jesus, &c

2. A rest from the toils of wilderness journeyings.

Wilderness traversed, city reached, labors over, &c.

"There on a green and flowery mount,
Our weary souls shall sit," &c.

3. A rest from the fears and dangers of the way.

These, numerous, constant, and distressing. Now far from danger; in the land of eternal safety.

4. A rest from the sufferings and afflictions of life.

Life a scene of trouble; mankind's heir loom; valley of tears, &c. Now

"Far from a world of grief and sin,
With God eternally shut in."

Rivers of pleasure, scenes of endless delight, and joys for evermore.

5. A rest of eternal and heavenly glory.

The salvation, inheritance, crown, &c., all eternal. I give unto my sheep "eternal life," &c

APPLICATION.

1. Travellers to heaven must sincerely seek and piously labor to secure the presence of God.

2. We cannot have it, without a joyous consciousness of it.

3. It is indispensable to our security and happiness.

4. It will be succeeded by eternal and heavenly rest.

SKETCH XC.

THE MARVELLOUS CHANGE.

"That ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light"—1 *Pet.* ii. 9.

True religion not only amends, but entirely changes, the character of man. Old things pass away, and all things become new. The views, dispositions, and actions of the life are all renewed. And it is a change the most joyous and beneficial; from poverty to riches, from degradation to honor, from misery to happiness, and from "darkness unto marvellous light."

Notice,

I. *Our pristine natural Condition.*

"Darkness."

Sin is a work of darkness; Satan, the prince of darkness; and the soul's natural state, one of night and darkness.

Naturally we are involved,

1. In the darkness of ignorance.

That is, ignorance of spiritual things; of God, and his blessed perfections; of his claims upon us, and our obligations to his law. Ignorant of his Son, and gospel, and Spirit. Ignorant of ourselves, and of the love of God, and of the way of salvation. This ignorance is universal; it covers the hearts of all men, however mentally great or learned, or however illiterate. It is the characteristic of the unrenewed mind, in every state and condition, that it is without the knowledge of God.

2. In the darkness of spiritual vassalage.

The soul is in the prison of Satanic thraldom. The slave of the devil; bound with fetters of evil. This state is sometimes described as "a pit without water," "a horrible pit," &c., "regions of darkness,' "shadow of death."

3. In the darkness of wretchedness and misery.

The soul overcast with the black cloud of guilt and condemnation. Condemned already, and the wrath of God abiding upon him. No hope of future good; no prospect of final happiness. As the way-lost traveller! as the mariner at midnight, amid the howling blackness of the tempest.

4. In the darkness of spiritual death.

Dead to God; dead in trespasses and sins. Under the sentence of eternal death, and daily meetening for the wrath to come. The way of the wicked is darkness. Dark at its commencement, darker in its progress and the blackness of eternal darkness in its termination.

Notice,

II. *The Change produced.*

"Called you out of darkness into marvellous light."

1. It is a change into light.

Into the light of knowledge, freedom, pardon, joy, hope, and eternal life. Former state entirely cancelled. A new era of enjoyment and action. New creatures in Christ Jesus.

It is a change,

2. Into divine light.

"His" light. That which his almighty grace produces in the soul; 2 Cor. iv. 6. The light of his countenance, and favor and image; light of fellowship with him; light of his love and joy; of his peace, &c

3. Into marvellous light.

It is astonishing and wonderful to the individuals changed. A change which they cannot express, and which fills them with joy unspeakable and full of glory. Marvellous in its influence on the life and character. Lion a lamb; vulture a dove Ethiopian's skin made white; the curse a blessing; the child of perdition an heir of glory. Once polluted, having the mark of the beast; now sanctified, and bearing the inscription, "Holiness to the Lord."

This change,

4. Is effected by the influence of the gospel.

"Who hath called us." Expressly stated, Acts xxvi. 16, &c., Rom. x. 16, &c.

This call is plain, full, free, and, when received by faith, is the power of God to the salvation of the soul.

III. *The Return demanded.*

"That ye should show forth the praises of him," &c.

We cannot give God an adequate return, but we can render the return demanded in the text.

We should show forth his praises,

1. By extolling his mercy.

Psalmist: "I waited for the Lord," &c. xl. 1, &c. Also ciii. 3, 11, 12.

2. By exhibiting his image.

If he hath brought us into his light, we shall display his image, we shall be the children of the day, and walk in the light, and our light will shine before men. As we displayed the image of the evil one we

shall now display the image of our heavenly Father.

3. By obedience to his authority.

We shall follow God as dear children. We shall do whatsoever he commands us; be his servants, and have our fruit unto holiness, &c. Yield the fruits of piety to the glory of his name. As he who hath called us is holy, so shall we also be holy in all manner of conversation.

4. By zeal for his glory.

If we have tasted that the Lord is gracious, we shall be constrained to labor for its diffusion.

> "Then shall we tell to sinners round,
> What a dear Saviour we have found,
> And point to his redeeming blood,
> And cry, 'Behold the way to God.'"

APPLICATION.

1. Let the sinner see his true state before God. One of darkness. Darkness of soul; spiritual darkness; darkness associated with all that is wretched, and dire, and tremendous

2. The only way of deliverance: and that is by the gospel. Gospel reveals our state, and shows the only way of salvation. It calls us to God, to his grace here, and to his glory hereafter By faith we realize all its blessings, and are brought out of darkness into marvellous light.

3. Let the believer learn his obligations. To show forth the praises of God. They *may* do so; they *ought* to do so. And it will be for their happiness and increase of holiness to be thus vigorously and constantly employed.

SKETCH XCI.

BARNABAS AT ANTIOCH.

"Who, when he came, and had seen the grace of God, was glad, and exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord." *Acts* xi. 23.

Antioch, the city to which the text refers, was about 280 miles from Jerusalem, and was distinguished on several interesting accounts. Here the evangelist Luke and the excellent Theophilus were born. Here the disciples of Jesus were first called Christians. Here the persecuted Christians fled, and found refuge after the death of Stephen. Here Jesus was preached, and many were converted, and an extensive and prosperous church of Christ was formed. And here it was that Barnabas beheld the "grace of God, and was glad, and exhorted," &c.

Observe,

I. *That where the Grace of God exists it will be seen.*

For "Barnabas *saw* the grace of God."

By the grace of God here is obviously meant the influences and effects of Divine grace on those who are its happy participants.

It will thus be seen,

1. In the marvellous changes it produces in the soul.

From darkness to light; from enmity to spirituality and love; from guilt and pollution to acceptance and holiness; from unbelief and pride to confidence and humility; from bearing the image of Satan to bear the likeness of God; a change from sin to purity; and from Satan to God.

It will be seen,

2. In the hallowing influence it exerts on the body.

Body and soul closely connected. One the vehicle of action for the other. Both redeemed. God requires both. Grace operates upon both. Eyes will survey his works, and peruse his word. Ears listen to his truth and commands. The tongue will magnify him. Feet run in the way of his ordinances. Hands be ministers of goodness, &c. Whole body presented as a living sacrifice, &c. Temple of the Holy Ghost &c.

3. In its practical evidences on the life

Rebel, now a subject—traitor, a sworn friend—enemy, a child. Old things passed away, and the life now one of faith, obedience, and love. Actions—temper—conversation entirely new. Now we cannot see changes, influences, and effects like these without exclaiming, "This is the finger of God." Notice,

II. *The exhibition of Divine Grace is a Source of peculiar Joy to the People of God.*

Hence Barnabas, when he saw it, "was glad." There are many reasons why the people of God are thus glad.

He was glad,

1. For his own sake.

He had heard of the extension of the Gospel, and had purposely visited that city: now therefore his joy was full. His expectations were realized, and he partici

pated of that felicity which the grace of God had diffused among them.

When our hearts are right with God, we shall ever rejoice at witnessing the blessed effects produced by the grace of God upon others.

2. He was glad for their sakes.

We cannot wish better to our fellow-creatures than that they should be partakers of the grace of God. Can we see a starving man fed—a slave liberated—a malefactor snatched from an ignominious death, and not rejoice? Yet the grace of God not only does this, but infinitely more, for the soul of man. It raises from sin to holiness, from danger to safety, from death to life, and from hell to heaven.

3. He was glad for the church's sake.

Every devout and sincere Christian longs and prays for Zion's prosperity. Prefers Jerusalem to his chief joy. Here, then, her walls were built up—family multiplied—army enlarged—boundaries extended, &c.

4. He was glad for Christ's sake.

"The love of Christ constraineth us," &c. To love his name, cause, people, &c. They pray for the extension of his kingdom; they long for the period when he shall be rewarded for his toils and sorrows, by seeing of the travail of his soul &c.

Notice,

III. *The Designs of Divine Grace can only be realized by constant adherence to Christ.*

Hence Barnabas "exhorted them all," &c.

Notice,

1. The subject of his exhortation.

"That they should cleave unto the Lord." Many enemies—many snares—attractions. Hence, indispensably necessary that we cleave unto the Lord.

To his *merits*, as our only ground of acceptance.

To his *Word*, as our only guide.

To his *ordinances*, as the means of spiritual refreshment and edification.

To his *Spirit*, as our sanctifier and source of comfort.

To his *people*, as our companions, &c.

Notice,

2. The manner of doing this which he enjoined.

"With purpose of heart"—with supreme affection—holy fervor—determined resolution—abiding constancy, &c.

3. The universality of his exhortation.

"He exhorted them all." All need it—all in danger—same means of safety for all. Young and aged, wise and illiterate weak and strong, members and teachers without this, no soul can be happy, prosperous, or safe.

APPLICATION.

1. How precious the grace of God.
2. How self-evident is genuine piety
3. How truly benevolent is Christianity
4. How all-important is pious constancy and perseverance.

SKETCH XCII.

CHRIST'S SAVING ABILITY

"Wherefore he is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him."—*Heb.* vii. 25.

THE apostle had been discoursing concerning the dignity and superiority of the priesthood of Christ over the priests of old. This was manifest especially in the greatness of his person, the unchanging perpetuity of his office, and the superlative preciousness of his sacrifice. Every thing connected with Christ's priesthood was better than those of old. The dispensation, the promises, the testament, the surety, all better.

The deduction from the whole is, "Wherefore he is able to save," &c

The text exhibits,

I. *Christ's Saving Ability.*

"Able to save to the uttermost."

And,

II. *The Characters whom it embraces.*

Those who "come unto God by him."

The text exhibits,

I. *Christ's Saving Ability.*

"Able to save to the uttermost"

Let us notice,

1. The *Nature* of this ability.

Jesus possesses,

(1) Meritorious ability.

As the sacrifice for sin, he had infinite efficacy within himself. His blood possessed boundless virtue, and was precious beyond human conception. As such it satisfied all the claims of the law, and made perfect atonement for human transgression Every demand was met, and fully dis

charged. Hence, by the shedding of his blood, he hath obtained eternal redemption for us. Heb. ix. 26; 1 Pet. i. 19; John i. 29. Jesus possesses

(2) Official ability.

God sent him expressly to be the Saviour of the world. It is his prerogative, and his only. He was anointed, lived, and died expressly for this. God raised him from the dead, and exalted him to his own right hand, that he might be a Prince and *Saviour*. Men may preach, and angels minister, but Jesus is the only Saviour of a ruined world. He possesses,

(3) Efficient ability.

Not only has he merit, and official authority, but he has also the power requisite for the gracious undertaking. All power belongs to him, both in heaven and on earth. No case too hard, no spiritual malady too inveterate. In the days of his flesh, at his word the deaf heard, the blind saw, the dumb spake, lepers were cleansed, devils expelled, and the dead raised. His arm is not shortened; his power is still omnipotent and immutable.

Jesus also possesses,

(4) Gracious ability.

He is as willing as he is able to save:

> "His love is as great as his power,
> And neither knows measure nor end."

He wants to save; he delighteth in mercy; and is always ready to pardon. Hence he says, "Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out."

But observe also,

2. The *Extent* of Christ's saving ability.

He is able to save "to the uttermost."

He is able to save,

(1) From all the present and future consequences of sin.

From its guilt, power, pollution, and love; from the dread and remorse it creates; from despair at death, and from eternal wrath.

He is able to save,

(2) Into all the positive enjoyments of the Divine favor.

Justification, regeneration, adoption, holiness, peace, and joy unspeakable and full of glory.

He is able to save,

(3) From the lowest depths of sin and misery.

The most criminal, vicious, and impure. The chief of sinners. Murderers, as Manasseh, the dying thief, the murderers of Christ, &c. He can save the most daring and reckless—Magdalene, Saul of Tarsus the lascivious Corinthians. No shade of guilt too dark, no accumulation of crime too great, no enormity of transgression, can surpass his saving power. He can forgive the thousand-pence as easily as the fifty-pence sinner.

He is able to save,

(4) At the last extremity of life.

The case of the malefactor is left on record to show that, at the last instant of existence, he can snatch souls as brands from the burning.

He is able to save,

(5) From the beginning to the end of our world's duration.

Abel, one of the first of the human family, he saved. And during every period from that to the present, has he been displaying his saving power. That ability is still unimpaired, and will retain all its wonted power, until the last sinner of our fallen world shall be brought from darkness to light, and from Satan to God. "Jesus Christ the same yesterday," &c.

He is able to save,

(6) All and every man within our world's circumference.

None too poor, and none too polished; none too far from heaven, or too near perdition. His resources are amply sufficient for each, for all, and every human being. Color, language, clime, or condition affect not his power to save.

He can save,

(7) Into all the inconceivable glories of eternal life.

He can save now; he can save in adversity, temptation, persecution, affliction, and death. He can save beyond death and exalt his believing people to all the interminable glories of endless salvation. His salvation is eternal. Eternal inheritance, crown, kingdom, and pleasures for evermore.

Notice,

II. *The Characters whom this Salvation embraces.*

Those who come unto God by Christ.

This implies,

1. Our distance from God.

And in coming to God we must be sensible of it, feel it, deplore it, &c.

In coming to God is included,

2. The movement of the heart towards him.

Convinced of our helplessness and ruined estate; anxious for God's forgiving mercy; earnest supplication for his gracious aid, &c. Prodigal, publican; the three thousand, &c. Jailer, &c.

3. The reception of God's favor through Jesus Christ

Christ received and trusted in, as the only Mediator between God and the soul. Hands laid on his sacred head. Jesus all and in all. Nothing pleaded but his obedience—nothing seen but his cross.

APPLICATION.

Here see,

1. The greatness of the salvation of the Gospel.

2. Supreme dignity and power of the Redeemer.

3 The only way to obtain eternal life.

SKETCH XCIII.

THE OBJECTS OF THE DIVINE DELIGHT.

"For the Lord taketh pleasure in his people."—*Psalm* cxlix. 4.

WHAT a spirit of delightful tenderness runs through all the declarations of God concerning his people! With what ardent affection he expresses his delight in all that relates to them! How many precious promises he has given them! They are the peculiar objects of his joy and complacency. His portion—his treasure—his own dearly beloved sons and daughters; and as a father pities his children, so doth the Lord pity them that fear him. The text is descriptive of his tender regards towards them, "For the Lord taketh pleasure," &c.

Let us,

I. *Describe the People Referred to.*

"They are *his* people."

As the Creator and Proprietor of all things, all mankind are his. He made, preserves, and upholds all creatures. Thousands, however, who are thus preserved by him acknowledge him not, and live without God in the world. This is the condition of the whole mass of mankind until changed by Divine grace. Who then are the Lord's people?

1. They bear the Lord's name.

Have been called to follow the Lord as dear children. As such the name of God is upon them. They are his disciples—subjects—servants—soldiers; in short, in all things, they are the Lord's. They have the white stone and new name.

2. They bear the Lord's image.

"Created anew," &c. Bore the image of the earthly, now of the heavenly. In regeneration they are made partakers of the divine nature, 2 Pet. i. 4.

3. They possess the Lord's Spirit.

"If any man have not the Spirit of Christ," &c. "They who are joined to the Lord are of one spirit." "Habitation of the Spirit." The Spirit of the Lord directs, comforts, and sanctifies them; and, by his holy influences, they are changed into the image of God, from glory unto glory, &c., 2 Cor. iii. 18.

4. They are zealous for the Lord's glory

They desire to behold it with Moses. They seek its diffusion with David. And they are actuated to humble yet cheerful obedience with it, as was Isaiah, vi. 1, &c. Hence they pray for it. Believe and hope for it. And live and labor for it.

Observe,

II. *The Lord's delight in his People.*

"The Lord taketh *pleasure* in his people."

1. He does so in their persons.

Their *bodies* are the object of his especial care and goodness. "The very hairs of their head," &c. "Bread shall be given," &c. "No evil can come near," &c. "He keepeth them so that none of their bones," &c. Their health and life are exceedingly precious in his sight. Their *souls* are especially the objects of his heavenly regards. His eyes are ever upon them for good. His ears ever open to their cry. He is their shield, rock of defence, and sure pavilion. He holds them in his hand, and keeps as the apple of his eye. "He giveth grace," &c.

2. In their graces.

These are the fruit of his own Spirit, and reflect his own image. He accepts and complacently delights in their faith—hope—love—patience, &c. As he beheld the finished creation with delight, and pronounced all very good; so he looks with delight on the new creation in the souls of his people, and in the sight, harmony, and fruitfulness, which is displayed.

3. In their services

In their prayers, both secret and public

Matt vi 6 In their plans of mercy and goodness. Almsgiving—hospitality, &c. Labors, self-denials, &c., for his sake. Not a cup of water will he forget. He beholds with delight all their works of patience, and labors of love.

He taketh pleasure,

4. In their dwellings and in all their concerns.

He loves the dwellings of Jacob. "No evil shall come nigh their dwellings." "All they do shall prosper." He blesses the work of their hands. The Lord blesses the habitations of the just, Prov. iii. 23. The just man's children are blessed after him, Prov. xx. 7.

He taketh pleasure in them,

5. At all times, and under all circumstances.

When poor and needy, the Lord thinketh, &c. When in adversity and trouble; "Call upon me," &c. When assailed by foes; "No weapon," &c. "If God be for us," When in afflictions, &c. "When thou passest through waters," &c In old age, Isa. xlvi. 4. When flesh and heart faileth, &c. When they die—"Precious in the sight of the Lord." "His rod and staff," &c. Their sleeping dust he will watch, and raise at the last day. And he will take pleasure in them through the endless ages of eternity. "They shall be mine, saith the Lord," &c., Malachi iii. 17. He will array them in white robes—crown them,—"lead them to fountains of living water," &c.

APPLICATION.

Let the subject lead,

1. To examination.

Are we the Lord's people. Really, and in sincerity and truth. Have we his name, Spirit, image, &c.

2. It should produce holy delight and satisfaction.

"Happy is the people that is in such a case," &c. The saints enjoy in common with others the bounties of his benign Providence; and in addition the richer blessings of his grace.

"Yes, saints are lovely in his sight,
He views his children with delight
He sees their hope and knows their fear,
And looks, and loves his image there."

3. It should lead us to take pleasure in God.

"Delight thyself in the Lord," &c. Exult, bless, and magnify him at all times "This God is our God, forever and ever. &c.

SKETCH XCIV.

THE BEST LABOR.

"Labor not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life."—*John* vi. 27.

HAPPY would it have been for thousands who were favored with Christ's ministry had they known and improved the day of their visitation. Instead of this, many followed Christ out of mere curiosity, while others were only anxious to eat of that temporal food which he miraculously provided. Jesus had just been reminding them of this, v. 26, and then he exhorts them not to "Labor for the meat which perisheth," &c.

Notice,

I. *The Prohibition.*

"Labor not for the meat which perisheth."

Let us,

1 Explain this prohibition.

By *meat* we understand all temporal good things;—as food, raiment, &c. &c. That variety and fulness of blessings which God has provided for us in this life. These *things* are *perishable.* Every thing around us is of this description. All things perish in the using of them. Never meet the wants of the soul. Have no reference to the eternal world. To *labor* not for these, cannot mean we are to be indifferent, and absolutely careless about them. We are enjoined to work, &c., 2 Thess. iii. 10. Indolence is a sin against a benign Providence. All good men were diligently and industriously employed. The patriarchs—prophets—Paul, yea, even the blessed and divine Jesus.

Let us then,

2. Illustrate the meaning.

We should not labor for these things,

(1) Pre-eminently. Should not have our chief first care. "Seek ye first the kingdom of God," &c. "One thing is needful," &c.

We should not labor,

(2) For an abundance of these things We do not require much. Jesus taught us to pray for "daily bread." "A man's

life consisteth not in the abundance," &c. "Having food and raiment," &c

We should not labor,

(3) Anxiously. We may labor cheerfully, continually, and diligently; but we are to be "anxious for nothing." See Christ's Address, Matt. vi. 25.

Let us,

3. Enforce the Prohibition.

We ought not thus to labor for the "meat," &c.

(1) Because they are uncertain. We are not sure that by any amount of labor we can get them. Race not to the swift, &c. Neither can we always retain them. Often make wings, &c. Called "uncertain riches."

(2) They are not capable of yielding happiness. A little of them cannot. Much cannot. The whole world cannot.

Their possession,

(3) Involves great responsibility. They are all talents which are committed to us. We must give an account. If not sacredly improved will prove treasures of wrath. Drown us in perdition. The rich fool Dives, &c.

Notice,

II. *The Direction.*

"But for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life."

1. That meat is Christ and his benefits.

Hence he represents himself as the Bread of Life. And he says, "his flesh is meat indeed, and his blood is drink indeed." He is the soul's clothing, and portion, and treasure, and life. All and in all.

2. This meat is certain and durable.

"Endures unto everlasting life."

(1) No amount of participants can diminish, much less exhaust it. The whole world may eat and be satisfied.

(2) Its benefits are permanent and abiding. Whoso eateth and drinketh, hunger and thirst no more.

(3) Eternal in its results. Forms and nourishes spiritual life in the soul here, and matures it in the world to come. Eternal riches—eternal blessings. And joys for evermore.

3. This meat deserves and requires our arduous and constant labor.

Not to merit it, but to enjoy it. Not to be worthy of it, but by it. This labor is fervent believing supplication. We are to ask for it in faith, &c To agonize until we possess it, &c. Then watchfully and prayerfully to hold fast, &c. "Work out our salvation," &c.

Now we ought to labor for this,

(1) *Supremely.* Worthy of our chief regard. Great end of life, &c.

(2) Diligently. Lest we should fall &c., and come short of God's rest. "Give all diligence," &c. "Be diligent to be found of him in peace."

(3) Constantly and with perseverance, until we receive the crown of life. We shall need it through life and until death.

APPLICATION.

Learn,

1. The utter fallacy of all earthly pursuits. If earthly good can be obtained, it will not, it cannot endure. Our souls will be poor and wretched through eternity. The world itself will be burnt up with fire.

2. The pre-eminence of Gospel benefits; present—satisfying and eternal.

3. The necessity of laboring for their possession. Thinking, conversing, desiring, are in vain without laboring.

4. Such invaluable blessings are worthy of our entire and devoted pursuits.

5. All who labor sincerely and evangelically shall possess them.

SKETCH XCV.

THE GLORIOUS GOSPEL.

"The glorious Gospel of Christ."—2 *Cor.* iv. 4.

ALL the works of God are glorious Wherever we look abroad, we see

"The wonders of his hands,
Or impress of his feet."

The earth displays his greatness, goodness, and power. The heavens display his glory, and the firmament showeth his handy-work. Who can lift his eyes upwards to the expanded skies, and behold the star-bestudded heavens, without exclaiming, "How manifold and glorious are all thy works, O Lord God Almighty!"

There is a scene still more delightful more glorious, and more sublime to man than any of these; a subject much more closely connected with his well being; not of secondary, but of the most momentous

consequence to him, both in time and in eternity. And that is, the subject of the ext, "The glorious Gospel of Christ."

Consider,

I. *The Gospel of Christ*, and,

II. *Its Glory*.

I. *The Gospel of Christ*.

Notice,

1. The Gospel; or, the glad tidings of salvation.

We have several beautiful and express summaries of it in the Divine word. The angels said, "We bring you good tidings of great joy," &c.; Luke ii. 10. Paul also says, "The Gospel I preached unto you, which you also received, and wherein you stand," &c. "That Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures." 1 Cor. xv. 1, &c. Also when he says, "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation," &c. 1 Tim. i. 15. The Gospel is the revelation of a Saviour to a guilty world.

Hence,

2. It is designated the Gospel of Christ.

Sometimes called the "Gospel of God." Rom. i. 1. "Gospel of the grace of God." Acts xx. 24. "Gospel of the kingdom." Matt. xxiv. 14. "Gospel of peace." "Gospel of salvation." "Everlasting gospel," &c. Eph. vi. 15, i. 13; Rev. xiv. 6. Oftentimes, however, it is represented as in the text, "The Gospel of Christ." See Rom. i. 16, xv. 29; 1 Cor. ix. 18; 2 Cor. ix. 13; Gal. i. 7. It is emphatically the Gospel of Christ.

(1) As Christ is its author. It was doubtless the eternal Word that made known the first edition of the Gospel to our first parents, and afterwards to Abraham, Jacob, David, the prophets, &c.; and finally, he personally introduced it, and published it to the world, and thus brought life, &c.

(2) He is the subject of the Gospel. The Gospel is a system of which Christ is the sun and centre. All its light and glory is derived from him. Jesus is the Alpha and Omega, the essence and life of the Gospel. His person, offices, work, and benefits, are the great essential themes of the Gospel.

(3) He is the great end of the Gospel. The Gospel is designed to make known Christ—to exalt Christ—to attract souls to Christ—to establish the kingdom—diffuse the glory, and subject the world to Christ.

Let us then consider,

II. *Its Glory*.

"The glorious Gospel of Christ."

The term glorious sometimes signifies that which is splendid and luminous: so the sun is glorious. Now the Gospel is full of celestial splendor, &c. The term signifies that which is great in opposition to what is small. Oak the glory of the forest—cedar, glory of Lebanon, &c. The Gospel is a great and mighty system of truth, and love, and mercy. Sometimes the term signifies that which is rich and magnificent. Hence the temple of Solomon, &c. Now the Gospel is full of the magnificent treasures of both the wisdom and goodness of God. "Unsearchable riches of grace."

The Gospel is glorious,

1. In the discoveries it reveals.

Reveals the misery and helplessness of man. Also the remedy for all his ills and woes. Makes known its efficacy, fulness, freeness, extent, and mode of application. Reveals salvation for this life, and opens before us a glorious prospect of eternal felicity. A heaven of blessedness. An eternity of dignity and bliss.

It is glorious,

2. In the benefits it confers.

Freedom to the slave. Raiment to the naked. Bread of life to the starving. Health to the sick. Pardon to the guilty. Adoption for aliens. Life to the dead. Salvation to the lost. And heaven to brands justly doomed to everlasting burnings. It confers all man needs, either in this world or in the world to come.

3. It is glorious in the influence which it imparts.

Gospel possesses amazing influence and power.

(1) A holy influence. Changes the heart. Renews the mind. Great instrument of sanctification. John xvii. 17 1 Tim. iv. 5.

(2) A happy influence. Word of peace and consolation.

(3) An exalting influence. Elevates the mind to God, and heaven, and eternal things.

(4) A supporting influence. Our staff on which we lean. Our celestial telescope. The bread of the soul. The cordial of life. Supports in temptation, afflictions, and death

4. It is glorious on account of the discoveries which it unfolds.

It reveals

To the spiritual tempest-tossed mariner a glorious haven. To the pilgrim a glorious city of habitation. To the warrior a glorious crown. To the laborer a glorious rest. To the believer a glorious world of celestial vision, where he shall see God. It unfolds a glorious resurrection, and ensures an eternity of bliss, utterly unspeakable and full of glory.

APPLICATION.

This glorious Gospel is,

1. The great theme of evangelical preaching.

2. The only hope of the guilty sinner.

3. And the joy and transport of the humble believer.

4. He who believeth it shall be saved—the unbeliever will most certainly perish.

SKETCH XCVI.

CHARACTER OF CALEB.

"But my servant Caleb, because he had another spirit with him, and hath followed me fully, him will I bring into the land," &c.—*Numb.* xiv. 24.

IMPERFECTIONS have distinguished some of the most eminent servants of God, whose history is presented in the holy oracles of truth. We do not refer to the glaring defects of Samson, Jephtha, Solomon—but to Noah, Abraham, Moses, Aaron, &c. Yet there are some few whose lives were eminently holy, and free from public moral deformities. Among these, was Enoch, Samuel, and Daniel. And not less, the renowned Joshua, and Caleb, the subject of the text. God deigns to give us his own estimate of this illustrious worthy. "But my servant Caleb," &c.

Let us notice,

I. *The Spirit he possessed.*

II. *The Course he adopted;* and,

III. *The Distinctions he received.*

Let us consider,

I. *The spirit He possessed.*

This is called in the text "another spirit." That is, a different spirit to that possessed by the other spies who went out to view the good land, and who brought an evil report upon it. Now Caleb's spirit was,

1. A spirit of affectionate obedience.

He loved God, and cheerfully obeyed his holy commands. They yielded an willing and reluctant obedience.

2. A spirit of faith and hope.

Theirs a spirit of distrust and fear. He both believed and hoped in God. They said the land was inhabited by giants, and that they never could possess it. He said, "Let us go up at once and possess it, for we are well able."

3. His was a disinterested and self-denying spirit.

He sought not his own welfare, comfort, or ease. His soul was ever solicitous to glorify God. They were always selfish, and regarded merely present advantages.

4. His was an active and zealous spirit.

He was willing to toil and lay himself entirely out for the honor of God, and the welfare of his cause. He glowed with ardent zeal, and his life was characterized by unremitting activity. They wanted the rest without the journey. The reward without the labor. The victory without the warfare.

5. His was a constant persevering spirit.

He stood firm. Held fast. Went forward. No wavering or halting. They were unstable as water, &c. Now hot, then cold. Now humble, and believing and obedient, then self-willed, faithless, and disobedient.

Observe,

II. *The Course which Caleb adopted.*

"He followed the Lord fully."

As such,

1. He possessed a right spirit.

Without this his following of the Lord would have been as imperfect as that of the other spies. His heart was right with God. The tree was good, hence also the fruit. The fountain was made pure, hence the streams also were pure. The law of God was in his heart, therefore none of his steps did slide.

In following the Lord,

2. He was regulated by a right rule.

He did not consult events, feelings, notions, or the suggestions of others; but the will of God. He followed the Lord in the way he commanded him.

3. He followed Him with all his heart.

"Fully." It was his business. His pre-eminent pursuit. The first and leading work of his life. His soul was consecrated to God, and of course all else was freely surrendered.

4. He followed him to the end of life.

He spent all, and was himself entirely spent in God's cause. Faithful to death. Ran until he reached the goal. Fought until he gained the crown. Persevered, until he obtained the promised rest.

Observe,

II. *The Distinctions he received.*

He received,

1. Divine approbation.

God saw, approved, and publicly commended. He designated him his "servant." Noticed his superiority, and exalted him before the hosts of Israel. So will Jesus confess all his people at the last day.

He received,

2. A glorious recompense.

"Him will I bring unto the good land," &c. The others, save Joshua, were excluded from God's rest. They fell as monuments of the Divine displeasure against unbelief, in the wilderness. But he entered the land of promise—of rest, and of abundance. Jesus will give to all his faithful servants, the unfading, incorruptible inheritance of the saints in light. They shall see the King in his beauty, &c. He will assuredly give unto them eternal life, &c.

APPLICATION.

What spirit do you possess? What course do you pursue? What prospect have you of entering the good land? Like Caleb, you must possess "another spirit" than that possessed by the world, or by mere professors. It must be a renewed and consecrated spirit, full of love, and faith, and zeal for the glory of God. Such only will the Lord approve, accept, and reward.

SKETCH XCVII.

THE TWO BUILDERS

"Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man which built his house upon a rock," &c.—*Matt.* vii. 24-27.

Jesus ended his celebrated Sermon on the Mount by the beautiful comparison of the two builders, as described in the text, and which naturally formed a very striking application to that sermon. As if he had said, "I have been making known unto you the great doctrines and laws of my kingdom, you have been hearkening with attention to the truths delivered, but the great end of my speaking and your hearing has yet to be accomplished. This sermon if it benefits you, must affect your hearts and govern your practice; and this I will illustrate by a comparison that must carry conviction to your minds." "Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings," &c.

Let us consider, in the two builders,

I. *The Points of Resemblance.*

And,

II. *Those Things in which they Differed*

I. *The Points of Resemblance between these Two Builders.*

1. They both heard Christ's sayings.

So it does not refer to a professor, and a pagan in the darkness of ignorance, or a Jew who utterly rejected Jesus, or an infidel who despised all sacred things, or a profane man who cared for none of these things. So far from this, they were both equally the hearers of the Saviour. Now it is of the utmost importance to the hearers of the word. We are commanded to hear the word of the Lord. Faith also cometh by hearing, &c.

2. They both saw the necessity of building a house, or place of refuge.

The word was not totally lost upon either of them. So far from this, it doubtless produced a spirit of inquiry in each of them. It was not heard altogether in vain. Saw the necessity of religion. Importance of engaging in its momentous concerns.

3. They both actually erected a house.

Many propose and resolve, and then abandon their plans, &c. Defer the commencement; or begin, and then cease. But both these resolved, began, proceeded, and finished the building.

4. Both houses were exposed to storms.

All men, with their works, will be tried. The *rains* of affliction will try us; the *floods* of Jordan—the streams of death will try us; the *storms* of eternity will try us

Notice,

5. Both builders rested with security in the edifices they had raised.

Man cannot be happy without hope—without confidence as to the future. All men trust in something. The godly man knows in whom he has believed, &c.

Now these are the points of resemblance,

Observe,

II. *Those Things in which they Differed*

They differed,

1. In their personal character.

One is styled wise, the other foolish. Now wisdom consists in selecting the highest object of pursuit, in adopting the best means for obtaining it, and in persevering till the object is realized. Wise men consider the value of the soul, meditate intensely upon its security, and adopt the most efficient measures for its eternal well being. The wise began by solemn, serious deliberation. The other obviously was merely affected and impressed, and did not duly and carefully consider.

2. They differed in their practice.

One was a doer, the other merely a hearer of the word. One had the name and the nature, the other the name only. One had the profession and the possession, the other the profession merely. One heard, and said I go, but did not the things commanded. He had the form, but was without the power. He was a talker—admirer—professor, but not a doer of the Lord's will.

3. They differed especially in the foundations on which they built.

This is the principal thing referred to. One built his house upon the rock, and the other upon the sand. Now however beautiful and costly the structure may be, the results mainly depend upon the foundation. Nothing can make up for an error in this. How striking the contrast here—rock and sand! What is this *rock?* The Lord Jesus Christ. He is the foundation chosen of God, and precious, and other foundation can no man lay. And how strikingly represented by the rock—strong, firm, immutable. He is God—all-sufficient. What is the *sand?* A mere profession, self-righteousness, dependence upon our benevolence, liberality, &c.; or trusting to the mercy of God, irrespective of the death of Christ; or a death-bed repentance, &c. All this is yielding and insecure—all sand.

4. They differed in the final result of each.

He who had built upon the rock stood against the rain, the floods, and the winds. He abode steadfast and unmoved in affliction, and death and eternity presented nothing terrific or destructive to his best interests. True piety will stand every test, abide every ordeal, and render us secure at all times: living or dying we are the Lord's. He who built upon the sand was now dismayed, and finally overwhelmed The house was undermined by the desolating torrent, and the winds smote it, and it fell. And great was the fall thereof Oh, who can tell how great is the fall?

(1) It is a fall which involves in it eternal destruction. "What shall it profit a man," &c.

(2) It is a disappointment of fondly cherished hopes. He thought all was well. In perfect imaginary security. When he looked for light, he found darkness; for life, death; and for heaven, hell.

(3) It is a fall total and irreparable Many of the errors of life may be retrieved Many mistakes rectified; many scenes of wretchedness reversed. But this is the loss of all, and forever. The time of building is gone—means removed—opportunity fled—ability ceased—harvest past, and summer ended.

APPLICATION.

1. How necessary is careful and strict examination.

2. How important a saving experimental knowledge of Christ.

3. How indispensable practical godliness

SKETCH XCVIII

TRUSTING GOD.

"Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee, because he trusteth in thee Trust ye in the Lord forever, for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength."—*Isa.* xxvi. 3, 4.

THE present world is emphatically a scene of anxiety and trouble. Well may it be likened to a valley of tears, and to a howling wilderness. No wonder that the people of God are often rendered unhappy and that they often require a refuge fron the storms of life. True religion reveals a happy remedy, by which we may be soothed and cheered in the midst of our distresses. "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace," &c

Notice,

I. *The peculiar State of Mind described*

"Whose mind is stayed on thee."

Now this state of mind denotes,

1. Right and satisfactory views of the Divine character.

If we view God as a being of terror we

shall endeavor to flee from him. But, if we think of him as the God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ—as the bountiful benefactor of the human family, and as the gracious source of all our enjoyments, then we shall be enabled to stay our souls upon him Proper views of Deity are essential to right feelings towards him.

It includes,

2. Believing confidence in his word.

Now his word is full of gracious statements and affectionate declarations. His good will towards us. These must be experimentally realized. We must cordially receive all the Lord's words, and implicitly expect their fulfilment.

It includes,

3. Lively hope in his mercy and grace.

Faith has respect to his veracity and truth, hope to his goodness and mercy. To stay our mind upon him is to look to him for the enjoyment of all good. Hope is the anchor which stays the vessel in time of storm; the staff which is the stay of the weary traveller, &c.

It includes,

4. Satisfaction with the Divine dispensations.

A readiness of spirit to acquiesce in the Lord's dealings, and cheerfully to receive the appointments of his divine hand. It is committing all our ways to him; casting all our care upon him; setting him always before us, &c.

Notice,

II. *The Advantages arising from this State of Mind.*

"Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace."

Now the blessedness arising from staying our minds upon God is described,

1. In its nature.

'Peace." It is not ecstasy, rapture, or transport, but *peace*. The opposite of agitation, restlessness, confusion, or alarm. Understanding clear, passions quiet, conscience happy. The whole soul serene. Peace with God, with ourselves, and with all men.

Then observe,

2. The superlative character of this blessing.

"*Perfect* peace."

In the original it is "peace, peace."

(1) Perfect as to its author. Peace from God. All his gifts are perfect

(2) Perfect in its appropriateness. Just suited to our capacities, desires, and circumstances

(3) Perfect in its fulness an abundance of peace. Peace upon peace—peace like the gliding waves of the sea, one following and succeeding another.

Observe, also,

3. The permanence of this blessing.

"Thou wilt *keep* him in perfect peace." Not only keep peace in him, but him in peace. So that he shall dwell in it, breathe its happy atmosphere; abide in it, as his fortress; not fleeting transient peace, but constant, durable, everlasting.

Then observe,

III. *The Duty connected with it.*

"Trust in the Lord forever."

Here we have,

1. The object of our trust.

"The Lord." Who possesses every attribute and quality deserving of our highest and most implicit confidence and reliance. An omnipotent arm. Omniscient eyes. Whose heart is full of essential love, boundless mercy, unchanging goodness, and eternal truth.

Observe,

2. The exercise itself.

And that is "trust." We are to depend, and wholly to rest upon him. Commit all we have to him; confide all we have in him. As the child trusts its parents, or the passengers of a vessel, the pilot. Trust in him for all things—temporal, spiritual, and eternal.

3. The duration of this confidence.

"Trust in the Lord *forever*." In health and sickness; in prosperity and adversity; in life and death; in time and eternity. Our life must be one of *unvarying trust in God.*

Observe,

IV. *The Motive suggested.*

"For in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength."

1. In the Lord there is all-sufficiency.

"Strength." Power for to effect all our necessities require. No want which he cannot supply; no misery which he cannot remove; no enemies which he cannot overpower; no danger from which he cannot extricate; no possible good which he cannot easily impart.

2. This all-sufficiency is everlasting.

"Everlasting strength." Same in all generations past—antediluvians, patriarchs prophets, apostles, martyrs, confessors &c., &c. Same now—still infinite, and will be the same forever. His eternity will

render him the source of unending blessedness to his people. Other sources of comfort, however suitable, are mutable; the fashion of this world passeth away, but Jehovah changes not. The same through the countless ages of eternity.

APPLICATION.

The subject ought to excite those who profess to love God:—

1. To careful examination. Are your souls stayed upon God? Can you say, "O God, our hearts are fixed?" &c. Do you enjoy this peace; the perfect peace of God which passeth all understanding? Are you trusting in the Lord? Is all your hope and confidence in God, and in him alone?

2. This subject is full of comfort to the people of God. Here is a fountain of consolation in trouble — a hiding-place in storms—joy in life—life in death—and felicity forever. "For in the Lord Jehovah," &c.

3. All other objects of confidence will be found delusive and insufficient. Health, riches, friends, &c. A mere profession. Our own righteousness, &c. We would urge all men, who wish to secure certain blessedness, "to trust in the Lord forever," &c.

SKETCH XCIX

MYSTERIOUSNESS OF PRESENT DISPENSATIONS

"What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter."—*John* xiii. 7.

THE circumstances connected with the text; Christ washing the disciples' feet; Peter's objection; Christ's reply, &c.

Notice,

I. *The Lord's Dealings with his People are often Dark and Mysterious.*

See Job xxiii. 8.

1. Refer to past ages.

Illustrated in the history of Jacob; the Israelites, in leading them about, &c.; Lazarus, in permitting his death, &c.; sufferings of his people, &c.; how they were persecuted, &c.; Elijah in the cave, Jeremiah in prison, Daniel in the den, the worthies in the fire, John beheaded, &c.

2. Survey the present.

People of God, how few compared with the mass, &c.; how poor, &c.; how afflicted, &c.; infidels, &c., how elevated, rich &c. Church still a garden—the world a wide dreary desert.

3. These mysteries the Lord does not design us to know at present.

We are not capacitated—only can view the present—cannot go back, or see before us—our light only imperfect. Now twilight. It would unfit us for usefulness and present enjoyment.

II. *These Mysteries shall be finally Solved.*

"What we know not now, we shall know hereafter."

1. Many things will be elucidated on earth.

Jacob found out all things were for, not against, him. Job's last state was better than the first. Martha and Mary found why the Lord had tarried, and not prevented their brother's death. Who has not had many perplexing scenes made quite clear in after-experience?

2. In heaven we shall know all, and that perfectly.

Then our organs of knowledge will be perfect; and we shall have cloudless and eternal light; see eye to eye, &c; view the whole way in which we have been led, &c. 1 Cor. xiii. 12.

III. *The practical Influence this subject should have upon us.*

It should produce,

1. Present satisfaction.

"What I do" He must do all wisely, kindly, perfectly, faithfully; he is our Father, Saviour, Lord.

It should be,

2. An antidote to despondency.

The affairs of the world and the church are not in the *hands* of Satan; nor wicked men; nor left to our own fallible direction. Almighty power directs, and infinite wisdom and goodness upholds and overrules all things.

It should be,

3. A call to patience.

Wait for the discovery. A development shall be given in the Lord's time. He requires us not to know, but to wait.

4. A stimulus to duty.

Duty is always ours; events God's. See Dan. xii. 13, &c.

It should,

5. Excite in us longings for heaven.

State of doubt not desirable—now per

plexed—now only partial light—there clearness, satisfaction, perfect knowledge, and exceeding joy. "We shall be satisfied when we awake," &c. "Blessed are the pure in heart," &c.

APPLICATION.

The subject should lead us to perceive,

1. Our present imperfections.

2. The twilight state of things in time.

3. The superiority of that condition, where we shall know even as we are known.

SKETCH C.

THE SAINT'S ASYLUM IN DISTRESS.

"When my heart is overwhelmed, lead me to the rock which is higher than I."—*Psalm* lxi. 2.

It is probable that this psalm was composed when David was in exile, through the unnatural rebellion of Absalom, his son. The psalm commences with sorrow and prayer, but, like many others, ends with joy and thanksgiving.

I. *Notice the Distress supposed.*

'When my heart is overwhelmed."

This world is a scene of sorrow—a dreary wilderness, &c. Man is born to trouble, &c. Believers must pass through much tribulation, &c.

Heart may be overwhelmed,

1. By distressing temptations.

We read of the wiles of the devil, fiery darts, &c. He desired to sift Peter, &c. Roaring lion. Sometimes comes in upon the soul as a flood—suggests horrid temptations, as he did to Christ. Matt. iv. 1–11.

2. By providential visitations.

Cross providences, disappointments, changes, adversities, afflictions, bereavements, forsaken of friends, &c.

3. By inward fears and depressions.

Fears as to our safety; doubts respecting our acceptance; fears of enemies, especially death, &c

Consider,

II. *The Asylum referred to*

"The rock higher than I."

The Lord Jesus is this rock. He is,

1. A rock of supplies

Typified by the smitten rock, which yielded such copious streams in the desert. That rock, says the apostle, was Christ.

2. He is a prospective rock.

Elevated on him we behold the Divine glory. And life and immortality are brought to light, &c. See Exod. xxxiii. 21.

3. He is a shadowy rock.

In him we are sheltered from present condemnation, and from the wrath to come Isa. xxxii. 2.

4. He is our foundation rock.

The soul's salvation rests upon him Isa. xxviii. 16; 1 Cor. iii. 11.

5. He is a high and lofty rock.

"Higher than I;" higher than man generally; higher than prophets, priests, &c. higher than angels. He is the "Most High." Name above every name; throne above throne, &c. In all things he hath the pre-eminence.

Observe

III. *The Prayer presented.*

"Lead me to the rock," &c

This prayer indicates,

1. Conscious insufficiency.

We are weak and helpless; cannot guide, nor keep ourselves. The Lord must lead us always, even unto death, &c

2. Confidence in Christ's all-sufficiency.

"He is higher than I." His knowledge infinite, his power almighty—goodness boundless. He cannot change, nor be confounded, nor be overcome.

3. Earnest desire to feel our connection with Christ.

Lead me to it—let me feel I am upon it—let me know my saving interest in him I wish to know that I do now believe, &c

APPLICATION.

How suited this prayer,

1. To the inquiring penitent,

2. To the timid saint,

3. To the aged Christian,

4. To the dying believer.

SKETCH CI.

GOD'S SOLEMN ADDRESS TO MAN

"O earth, earth, earth, hear ye the word of the Lord."—*Jer.* xxii. 29.

It is infinite condescension in God to behold the things which are done upon earth. Yet Jehovah does thus direct his attention to the children of men. He is concerned for the welfare of all his creatures, and especially waits to bestow his saving benefits on the human race. But this he can only do in a way consistent

with his holy nature, and glorious perfections. He makes men happy by conforming them to his own image, and communicating to them his Holy Spirit; and this is effected through the instrumentality of his blessed word. Hence he says, "O earth, earth," &c.

Notice,

I. *The Characters addressed.*

And

II. *The Exercise enforced.*

I. *The Characters addressed.*

"O earth, earth, earth."

Man is sometimes described as dust, and his frailty is likened to the grass, and the flower of the field.

When addressed as earth, we are,

1. Reminded of our native origin.

"Man is of the earth, earthy." God made man of red earth. The earth is therefore our mother: from it were we brought forth. Hence the folly of pride of pedigree and descent. God hath made of one blood all the families, &c.

2 We are reminded also of our true nature.

Not only from the earth, but of it. That powerful muscular frame is merely brittle earth; that beautiful countenance tinted earth; those sparkling eyes, gems of earth; those wonderful nerves, the source of pleasure and pain, fine cords of earth; that amazing brain, the seat of the mind, one wonderful, curious-wrought mass of earth.

3. We are thus reminded of the source of our supplies.

"Earth:" our houses are erected on it, and it yields us the staff of life; it presents unto us corn, wine, and oil, and the crystal streams spring forth out of it.

4. We are reminded, too, of the earthly state of our minds.

The immaterial spirit is clogged and united to the earth. Hence, in man's natural state, his pleasures, honors, and desires are all earthly. The earth occupies, yea, absorbs the mind. "What shall I eat and drink," &c.

5. We are reminded of the tendency of human beings.

We came from, exist upon, and are travelling to the earth. Soon will it receive us into its earthly arms; the grave will be our house, and every human being must finally mingle with the dust.

Notice,

II. *The Exercise enforced.*

"O earth, earth, earth, hear the word of the Lord"

Observe,

1. The subject of attention.

"The word of the Lord." The revealed will of God—the Holy Scriptures—the preached Gospel.

The Gospel is obviously the word of God.

It bears the impress of divinity.

It is possessed of divine energy. Hence how it pierces, alarms, convinces, converts &c.

It produces divine changes, civilizes the savage, moralizes the profane, sanctifies the impure.

Observe,

2. This word is to be heard.

The place where it is published must be approached; then external attention must be given. It must be heard with carefulness, with self-application, and in faith.

3. This exercise may be enforced from many considerations.

Especially when you consider,

(1) The Being who addresses you. It is God who speaks. Jehovah of hosts. Whose word possesses almighty power: which caused Sinai to shake, and the hills to tremble, &c.; whose word is life or death—raises to heaven, or sinks to hell.

(2) From the word itself. It is the word of knowledge, mercy, and salvation; not of judgment and death.

(3) From the universality of the address. It is addressed to every man; every man needs it. Suited to all—sent to all.

(4) From our dying condition. Life is ebbing; time passing; Judge at the door; eternity at hand.

(5) From the responsibilities involved. Not to hear is contempt of God. What shall the end be of those who obey not the gospel of Christ? "How shall we escape," &c.

APPLICATION.

Urge the text upon all classes.

1. Believers, hear the word of the Lord, and grow in knowledge and wisdom. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, &c

2. Formalists, hear, &c. And be doers of the word, &c.

3. Backsliders, hear, &c. And return unto the Lord, &c. Hos. xiv. 1, 2

4. Mourning penitents, hear, &c. And believe the record, and call upon the name of the Lord, and ye shall be saved.

5. Hardened unbelievers, hear, &c. And prepare to meet your God.

Finally: all who are in the graves shall hear his voice, and come forth, &c. And every soul shall hear it passing his irrevocable sentence, and pronouncing his fina doom.

SKETCH CII.

THE DISTINGUISHING SIGNS OF THE RIGHTEOUS.

"Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and that cry for all the abominations done in the midst of her," &c.—*Ezek.* ix. 4–6.

In the preceding chapter Ezekiel is called to behold, in vision, the abomination of the house of Israel. Then he is directed to denounce against them the designs of Divine wrath. After this he is called to behold one in the attire of a priest, with an inkhorn in his hand, accompanied by five others, who had weapons of slaughter in their hands. And the man with the inkhorn is addressed in the language of the text, "Go through the midst," &c

Notice,

I. *The Characters described.*

"The men that sigh and cry for all the abominations," &c.

The characters are those,

1. Who inwardly feel and lament on account of the abominations of men.

Many are totally indifferent themselves; many appear partially anxious for themselves, but totally indifferent to others. Those who are sincerely godly, after offering themselves to the Lord, feel their souls burdened on account of the depravity which prevails around them.

Now they thus feel,

(1) From a remembrance of their own former condition. They know how bitter and evil sin is. They have experienced the bondage, the wormwood, and the gall.

They thus feel,

(2) From a sincere concern for the glory of God. They desire to see the divine glory. God is glorified in the salvation of souls. He is magnified in their praises lives, &c. They show forth his praises, &c. Are his workmanship, &c.

They thus feel,

(3) From a deep compassion and love to souls. Religion in every case produces deep-toned pity for souls. The good man contemplates their original dignity, their amazing powers and faculties, their deep and fallen estate; the immense price at which they have been redeemed, and the endless woes to which they are exposed. "He sighs," &c.

Observe,

2. The evidence of this inward feeling for souls.

"They *cry* for all the abominations," &c.

This cry may include,

(1) The cry of a godly example. Every Christian is a constant monitor; every pious act nas a voice to address the sinner.

(2) The cry of earnest entreaty and admonition. Christians are to testify to the world; to warn, rebuke, admonish, entreat, exhort, expostulate, &c.

(3) The cry of fervent prayer for their salvation. "O, let the wickedness of the wicked," &c. See Abraham pleading for Sodom, Moses for Israel, Samuel, David, Jeremiah, Paul, &c. Jesus for his murderers, &c.

Notice,

II. *The Mark appointed.*

"And set a mark upon the foreheads, &c.

Now this is,

1. A mark of distinction.

Thus are God's people distinguished from the rest of the world. They are a peculiar people, &c. Name, nature, costume, &c. "Ye are not of the world," &c.

2. It is a Divine mark.

Human distinctions are often erroneous, seldom important. God must give the impress. He must stamp the image. We are anointed and sealed of God.

3. This mark is prominent.

"In the forehead." Grace in its essence is secret, but always visible in its effects God sees its nature and reality, and men its evidences and fruits. This mark is visible to God, angels, devils, and men.

4. This mark is essential.

Nothing will supply its place. Whatever we are, or say or do, we must sigh

and cry for all the abominations. Without this sign we are strangers to the grace of God.

Observe,

III. *The Deliverance secured.*

The avengers are not to come near those who have the mark, &c.

Now this deliverance,

1. Is from destruction.

From the sword of the destroyer. To us, from the second death.

2. It is personal.

Only him with the mark. Not his family; not his dearest friend, &c. Religion entirely a personal matter. See Matt. xxiv. 37–41.

3. The deliverance is certain.

God commands that they do not come near them. They shall all be preserved, and preserved completely. Not one in the ark perished—not one Israelite on the death of the first-born in Egypt—not one who had a wedding garment was expelled—not one believing soul shall go down to the pit. It cannot be. God's word and perfections are pledged; Christ's blood has been shed; the influence of the Spirit imparted, &c

APPLICATION.

1. The subject furnishes a test of Christian character. Do we sigh and cry, &c. Are we affected by the prevailings of impiety, the aboundings of transgression, drunkenness, profanity, sabbath desecration, &c.

2. It should be a stimulus to increased exertion. The world is perishing—spirits are passing into eternity.

3. Urge upon the exposed sinner the necessity of immediately obtaining the mark. He that believeth in the Lord Jesus Christ shall be delivered from condemnation and eternal wrath.

SKETCH CIII.

CONSTANCY IN WELL-DOING.

"And let us not be weary in well doing; for in due season we shall reap if we faint not."—*Gal.* vi. 9.

The Galatians had once run well, but had been hindered through the influence of false teachers, who had turned them away from the simplicity of the Gospel. The design of the apostle, throughout this epistle, is to lead them back again to the truth, as it is in Jesus. Throughout the epistle, therefore, he has been laboring to impress upon them the necessity of relying upon the Saviour for acceptance, without any reference to the deeds of the law. In the paragraph wherein the text is found, he is inculcating experimental and practical religion. "Be not deceived," &c. ver. 7, 8 Then he urges them to constancy and perseverance. "And let us not be weary," &c

Notice,

I. *The Engagement referred to*

"Well doing."

II. *The Exhortation given*

"Let us not be weary."

III. *The Motive assigned.*

"For in due season we shall reap," &c

Notice,

I. *The Engagement referred to*

"Well doing."

What is well-doing?

(1) It cannot be confounded with *evil doing*. And all sin is evil doing; all indifference and thoughtlessness is evil doing

(2) *Resolving* is not doing. Many resolve, but their goodness is as the morning cloud, &c.

(3) *Professing* is not doing. The son, in the Gospel, said to his father, "I go, sir, but went not."

(4) *Feeling* is not doing. We may feel sorrow and regret; we may feel anxious; we may feel joy or happiness; but the text does not refer to what we enjoy or experience, but to what we do and practise. Now Christian well-doing must include ourselves, the church, and the world.

1. Well-doing must respect ourselves.

And this supposes that we have been converted from the evil of our ways, for we cannot do well in the ways of depravity and practical evil. Growing in grace especially knowledge, faith, hope, love, and humility. Meetening for heaven, by increasing spirituality of mind, deadness to the world, and conformity to the likeness of the Saviour. Being active in the work of salvation, faithful as stewards of God, courageous as soldiers of the cross, zealous and persevering as racers for eternal life. "Pressing towards the mark," &c.

2. Well-doing must respect the church

Our first concern must be our personal salvation and happiness, then the mystical body of Christ, the church. Of this we are members. Then there are duties for

as to discharge, offices to fulfil, for which we are responsible, and which we are required by Jesus conscientiously to perform. We must be eyes to see, ears to hearken, mouths to plead, hands to labor, feet to walk, or shoulders to bear for the body the church. 1 Cor. xii. 12–27; Eph. iv. 11–13.

3. Well-doing must respect the world.

Believers are not of it, or conformed to it; but they are in it, and they must live to promote its welfare. We must be lights in it—the salt of it. Loadstones to draw men out of it to Christ. Weep over it, pray for it, and earnestly labor in it. "Holding forth the word of life." Saying, as Moses did, "Come with us, and we will do you good," &c. How many facilities we have to do it good—schools, tracts, preaching of the gospel, &c. Now faithful attention to these things may be termed well-doing.

Observe,

II. *The Exhortation given*

"Be not weary," &c.

1. The text supposes that there is danger of wearying.

This may arise from various causes:

(1) Some are constitutionally wavering and unsettled. Perseverance with such in any thing is very difficult.

(2) Doing implies toil, and human nature is fond of ease.

(3) Often difficulties in the way of well doing, and resolution is indispensable.

(4) Well-doing requires sacrifices, and we are prone to selfishness.

(5) Satan and the world will be against us, so that we must fight and wrestle even in doing good.

(6) Often our labors appear useless, and we are in danger of being discouraged.

The exhortation urges upon us,

2. Constancy and perseverance.

"We are not to be weary."

(1) Because God has formed us especially for well-doing. He has given us the faculties and the feelings requisite; he hath made us for himself, and to manifest his glory.

(2) Because this is the great end of our regeneration, that we may live to God. Not our own, &c. "Present our bodies," &c. "We should show forth the praises," &c.

(3) Because well-doing is inseparably connected with our safety. Only two ways, &c

(4) Because it is always identified with our happiness. There is a holy pleasure, an inexpressible delight, in doing good.

(5) Because it associates with us the highest orders of beings. All holy men have been acquainted practically with well-doing. Angels are always engaged in well-doing. Jesus was the great model of well-doing. He went about doing good. He did all things well. God is incessantly engaged in well-doing. How we are exalted to true dignity by well-doing.

But there is another consideration, which is,

III. *The Motive the Text assigns.*

"We shall reap if we faint not."

"We shall reap,"

1. The first fruits here.

In doing good we obtain good. Conformed to Christ. Increase of peace. Shall see some present good. Blest in doing, &c. We shall reap—in affliction and death, retrospect, &c. God's providence shall favor such.

2. The full harvest hereafter.

"In due season."

When Christ shall appear, he shall confess you, &c. You shall be rewarded at the resurrection of the just—the full harvest—the end of the world. Then our Lord will reckon with his servants, and say, "Well done," &c. Then when Christ appears, will he give the crown, &c. Now our reaping will,

(1) Be graciously abundant. His rewards will be infinitely over and above our due. Worthy of his infinite and munificent goodness to bestow.

(2) Our reaping will be proportionate to our well-doing. Parables of talents, &c. Liberal shall reap liberally. Heavy cross, a bright crown Great suffering, great glory.

(3) Our reaping is absolutely certain Promise of the Father and the engagements of the Son render it irrevocably sure. Many have reaped, &c.

APPLICATION.

1. Evil-doers shall also reap—wretchedness and anxiety here, and eternal woe hereafter.

2. Those who cease well-doing cannot obtain the promised reward.

SKETCH CIV.

THE GOSPEL OF THE KINGDOM.

"And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations, and then shall the end come."—*Matt.* xxiv. 14.

THE text may refer to the general publication of the Gospel in the then known world, before the entire destruction of Jerusalem and the Jewish polity. For it appears that, before that period, it had been made known to all the world, and brought forth fruit. See Col. i. 6. But we conceive the passage may more especially refer to the universal diffusion of the truth before the termination of the Christian era.

Let us consider,

I. *The Subject of the Text.*

II. *The Mode of its Communication.*

III. *The Extent of its Diffusion.*

IV. *The Design of its Publication.*

I. *The Subject of the Text.*

"The Gospel of the kingdom."

1. The Gospel.

Glad tidings; good news; tidings of a Saviour for a lost and dying world. See 1 Cor. xv. 1–6; Luke ii. 10; 1 Tim. i. 15.

2. The Gospel of the kingdom, or reign.

Jesus the Saviour is a King. He came to erect a spiritual empire in the world. Hence his church is not a lawless but a governed society or polity, Jesus being the Head and Lord. Sometimes called the kingdom of God, of grace, of heaven, &c. The gospel publishes this kingdom, is the grand means of its extension, &c. This kingdom also is inseparably connected with the glory of heaven. One is introductory to the other. Those who are the subjects of the kingdom of grace, are heirs to the kingdom of glory.

Observe,

II. *The Mode of its Communication.*

This gospel of the kingdom is to be "preached." We have it written, but that is not enough; that is not the divine plan for the evangelization of the world. It is to be effected by the preaching of the cross. This preaching implies the explaining, the illustrating, the offering of the gospel to mankind. Ethiopian eunuch.

It must be preached,

1. Freely.

Its statements and invitations are all such.

2. Plainly.

That the poor and illiterate may understand it, and live.

3. Affectionately.

From love to Christ and love to souls

4. Faithfully.

Declaring the whole counsel of God "Warning every man," &c. Col. i. 28. The gospel, the whole gospel, and nothing but the gospel.

Notice,

III. *The Extent of its Diffusion.*

"In all the world."

1. The whole world stands in need of it.

Lieth in wickedness—fallen—guilty—perishing.

2. The Gospel is the only remedy for it.

Philosophy, legislation, education, &c., have all failed. Gospel grand recipe—the world's catholicon—the balm of life.

3. It is expressly designed for all.

It announces a Saviour for all—testifies o' a sacrifice for all. It is authoritatively sent to all; all are invited, and all the world shall hear its joyful sound.

IV. *The great End of its Publication.*

"As a witness," then shall the end come.

It is not clear that it will ever convert all. We now live in the evening of the last day. Six hundred and fifty millions of our race never yet heard it. The church will never possess more ample resources than in the apostolic age. But all the world shall have the offer. And it shall be a witness to the whole world.

It shall witness,

To man's ruined state—to God's unbounded mercy and grace—to the efficacy of Christ's death—to man's accountability—to the inexcusableness of every child of man. It will be a friendly joyous witness to every believer, and a condemnatory and awful witness against every unbeliever. Wherever it is preached it witnesses now to the consciences of men; but it will witness clearly and universally to all men at the last day.

APPLICATION.

1. The important responsibility in having the gospel preached unto us.

2. Our duty to labor for its diffusion among those who possess it not. Zeal for the divine glory, love to the blessed Jesus, and compassion for souls, should excite us in this holy and divine work.

SKETCH CV.

GOD'S GRACIOUS ENGAGEMENTS WITH HIS CHURCH.

"And I will make them and the places round about my hill a blessing, and I will cause the shower to come down in his season, there shall be showers of blessing."—*Ezek.* xxxiv. 26.

Let us consider,

I. *The Description given of God's Church.*

'My hill."

It is often thus described, no doubt, in reference to the temple being built on the hill of Zion. "Who shall ascend my holy hill," &c.

The term denotes,

1. Elevation.

World is sunk, fallen, degraded. The church is raised out of it, exalted, &c.

2. Firmness and stability.

Not an erection upon sand, endangered by every storm, &c., but upon the towering hill that has withstood the blasts of centuries. The mountain of the Lord cannot be moved.

It denotes, also,

3. Visibility.

It is a hill to be visible to all in every direction its top pointing towards the skies.

4. Healthfulness and purity.

Fogs, &c., occasionally overcast the tops of hills, but they generally settle in the valleys, and lower parts of the earth. The mountain air pure, balmy, bracing the system, &c. Here souls are matured for the healthy regions of the celestial paradise.

But this is described as *God's* hill.

"My hill."

Observe,

1. The Lord founded it.

He laid its foundations. For the Lord hath founded Zion.

2. It is the place of his divine residence.

His heart and his eyes are there perpetually;

> "He makes his churches his abode,
> His most delightful seat."

This is my rest, &c.

3. The scene of his glories.

Here he manifests himself, &c. Here his beauty is beheld, &c. Ps. xxvii. 4.

4. It is the object of his especial love.

His portion, treasure, delight, engraven on his hands, &c. Gates continually before him.

Consider,

II. *The Promise made to it.*

"I will cause the shower to come down.' &c

1. The promise is general.

He engages to bless it. Protection, provision, comfort, and prosperity, all included

2. The promise includes abundance.

"Showers of blessing." Bounty of God infinite. Can easily fill our vessels to overflowing. See 2 Kings iv. 1, &c Mal. iii. 10.

3. The blessings are to be seasonable.

"Shower in his season." Not before necessary; not when it is too late; but a the crisis of need, &c. Ps. cvii.

4. The blessings are to promote a happy influence on all around.

"And the places round about my hill," &c. The church is to spread the savor of grace through the whole earth. To be an eternal excellency, the joy of many generations.

APPLICATION.

1. Do we dwell in the Lord's holy hill? see Psalm xv.

2. Congratulate the children of Zion. Let them be joyful, &c.

3. Invite sinners all around to come and join themselves to the people of the Lord, &c.

SKETCH CVI.

THE MADNESS OF SIN

"When he came to himself."—*Luke* xv. 17.

How graphic and touching are the descriptions given of the fallen and miserable state of human nature in the holy oracles of God! It is a state of poverty, a state of blindness, a state of universal disease, a state of total wretchedness, a state of imminent peril; and it is a state of *insanity* "For madness is in their heart while they live," Eccl. ix. 3. So of the poor wretched prodigal it is said, "When he came to himself;" clearly implying his former mad and insane state.

The sinner's condition is one of madness

I. *Madness is the Derangement of the intellectual Powers.*

These powers enable men to understand, judge, reflect, &c. The sinner knows not, worse than the ox or ass. He considers not—he reflects not. His movements are evidences of stupidity and folly

II. *In Madness Passion rules instead of Reason.*

The sinner thus acts by impulse, and by impulse only. He lays down no rational plan, or rule of action. He deliberates not Never calculates as to consequences. Like a vessel without helm or rudder, at the mercy of the winds and waves, &c.

III. *Madness is connected with strange Delusions.*

Often imagine they are great, and rich, and healthy. Often the maniac sings of freedom in his chains, &c. How exactly realized in the case of the sinner; he says he is rich, and happy, and free, while he is poor, and blind, and miserable, and perishing.

IV. *Madness will be proved by the Objects of Choice and Rejection.*

A sane person prefers good to evil, safety to danger, &c. A madman has no just idea of things. He trifles with peril, sports with danger, rejects the good and chooses the evil. So the sinner neglects and undervalues his soul, murders time, is thoughtless of heaven, and unconcerned about eternity.

V. *Madness will be manifest from the Conversation.*

It is either violent, incoherent, or insipid. How exemplified in the angry, profane, and vain conversation of the ungodly.

VI. *Madmen are uninfluenced by Counsel.*

How true of sinners! Parents have counselled—"My son, if thy heart," &c. Friends have counselled—"Come thou with us," &c. Ministers have counselled —"We beseech you," &c. The Holy Spirit has counselled, &c., yet sinners will not hear.

VII. *Madmen think all Others mad, save Themselves.*

Mad infidel, says all believers are mad; mad drunkard, thinks the sober are mad, &c. Worldling thinks the heavenly-minded Christian is mad. Festus, Paul. Even of Jesus, they said, "He has a devil and is mad."

VIII. *Madmen are dangerous to Others.*

So one sinner destroyeth much good. What a ruinous influence they exert on friends, families, neighborhoods, &c. How many heart-broken parents, wives, children, &c.

IX. *Madness is often fatal in its Results.*

Thousands have lived and died so. Often leads to self-destruction. Sin, if not removed by the influence of the Gospel will assuredly tend to death. "The soul," &c. "The wages of sin," &c. "The wicked shall be turned," &c

APPLICATION.

1. Spiritual madness is self-procured, therefore wilful and altogether inexcusable.

2. Spiritual madness tends to the death of the soul. Eternal wo.

3. For spiritual madness there is one grand efficient remedy, and one only, the glorious Gospel of the blessed God, salvation by faith in the merits of the Lord Jesus Christ.

4. The application of this remedy invariably brings sinners to a right state of mind. Like the recovered demoniac, "to the feet of Christ, clothed, and in their right mind."

SKETCH CVII.

THE LORD'S PATHS.

"O Lord, teach me thy paths."—*Psalm* xxv. 4.

THE wicked say to God, Depart from us, we desire not the knowledge of thy ways; the good man acknowledges God in every thing, and he commits himself entirely to his guidance and guardian care He recognises the principle, and breathes the spirit, of the text, "O Lord, teach me thy paths."

Notice,

I. *The Prayer.*

Here are two things. The subject of the prayer—"Lord's paths."

1. Paths of Divine Providence.

Often dark, mysterious—always wise and right, and good.

2. Paths of grace.

Way of holiness, happiness, &c. Way through the desert to Canaan. Sometimes obscure and clouded. Pillar of cloud necessary.

3. Paths of duty.

"Lord, what wouldest thou have me to do?" Duty and ease, duty and interest, duty and desires, often at variance

Observe,

The *prayer* itself is for *Divine teaching*—"Lord, teach me." Here is an admission of ignorance, of insufficiency, of anxiety and of application to the right source

"Lord, teach me."

1. Clearly to understand thy paths.
2. Heartily to approve of them.
3. Constantly to walk in them.

Notice,

II. *The Importance of this Prayer.*

1. It is important to our intellectual and spiritual improvement.

To grow in knowledge, path shine more and more, &c. 2 Pet. i. 5.

2. It is important to our comfort.

How unhappy the mariner in a dense fog, traveller in the dark, &c.

3. It is of importance to our safety.

In danger of error, apostacy, &c. None but God can guide us safely, &c.

Notice,

III. *The Way in which God answers this Prayer.*

1. By exhibiting the examples of his saints.

"We are to be followers of them," &c.

2. By the statements of his word.

1 Pet. i. 19; 2 Tim. iii. 16.

3. By calling us to imitate his Son.

"He hath left us," &c. 1 Pet. ii. 21.

4. By the influences of his Spirit.

John xiv. 16, 17; xvi. 13, &c.

"Lead us to holiness, the road
That we must take to dwell with God;
Lead us to Christ, the living way,
Nor let us from his pastures stray.

"Lead us to God, our final rest,
In his enjoyment to be blest;
Lead us to heaven, the seat of bliss
Where pleasure in perfection is."

SKETCH CVIII.

DIVINE GOODNESS CELEBRATED.

"Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits," &c.—*Psalm* ciii. 1–4.

This psalm is one strikingly beautiful and interesting. As a literary composition it is possessed of distinguishing excellencies; but, considered as a sacred and pious composition, it has a claim upon our highest and most grateful attention. David evidently excelled in these holy exercises. He breathed a high and heavenly atmosphere, and seemed to have a kindredness of spirit with those who constantly stand before the throne of God, and praise him incessantly in his temple.

Let us notice, in the text,

I. *The Mercies enumerated.*

And,

II. *The Thanks Presented.*

I. *The Mercies enumerated.*

Among these observe he acknowledges

1. Benefits bestowed.

The term is of a very general kind, and includes all the divine bounties and favors whether they relate to the body or soul—to time or eternity. We may classify the divine benefits, as,

Personal. Life, health, food, &c.

Spiritual. The great gift of his Son gospel ordinances, Word, Spirit, &c.

Now these are "*His*" benefits. God is the source of all. "Every good and perfect gift," &c They are also described as being *numerous*. "All." Who can estimate the acts of the divine goodness? Absolutely innumerable. Hence God is said to load us with benefits; they are pressed down upon us; surround us at all times; every morning and evening renewed, &c.

He acknowledges,

2. Iniquities forgiven.

Term signifies aggravated sin. Now several things here demand our attention.

(1) We are all chargeable with iniquities: heart, mouth, life, have transgressed &c.

(2) Our iniquities are many. "All." How many God only can tell.

(3) All these iniquities God forgives. Forgives freely, fully, and forever. Blots them out of his book, &c.

(4) This forgiveness is communicated through repentance and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

3. Diseases healed.

"Who healeth all thy diseases."

Our diseases are of two sorts.

(1) Bodily diseases. Sin has sown the seeds of unnumbered diseases in the human frame. Hence they are various, painful, and mortal in their tendency. God often heals these. He has given us medicinal plants and minerals, &c. Blesses the skill of the physician, &c.

(2) Spiritual diseases. Sin is the great malady of the soul. It has deformed, weakened, and exposed the soul to eternal death. By his word, and Spirit, and the blood of the cross, he healeth all our spiritual diseases.

4 Redemption from destruction.

That is, delive ance from imminent peril. Israelites from the destroying angel; see Psalm xci. 3–7. Lot from Sodom.

He bestows,

5. A crown of loving-kindness and tender mercies.

Tender mercies; acts of softest and gentlest goodness; kindness full of love and complacency; more tender than that of the fondest mother, &c. Isa. xlix. 15; lxvi. 13.

And these as a crown encircle the soul, elevate and surround us on every side. Such, then, are the mercies which he enumerates.

Observe,

II. *The Thanks presented.*

1. He blesses God.

Extols and celebrates his goodness, rehearses the acts of his mercy, &c.

2. He does this with all his soul.

His soul enjoyed and appreciated the goodness of God; his heart was deeply affected.

3. He calls upon all within him to join in the work of praise.

His understanding, his judgment, his will, yea, all his mental powers and warmest affections were engaged in this exercise.

4. He purposes a lively remembrance of God's goodness.

"And forget not all his benefits." He would keep it before his eyes; he would be constantly meditating upon it; morning and evening, and in the night watches, &c. To forget is deeply criminal and ungrateful. If any thing can, this will stop the divine supplies, &c.

APPLICATION.

1. The amazing extent and profusion of the divine goodness.

2. The immense obligations we are under to serve and bless God.

SKETCH CIX.

AN ADDRESS TO CHILDREN

"Come, ye children, hearken unto me: I will each you the fear of the Lord."—*Psalm* xxiv. 11

The passage contains,

I. *A Request.*

And,

II. *A Promise.*

Notice

I. *The Request.*

Notice,

1. The request is made to children.

"Come, ye children," &c.

Children should be the objects of our special attention. God has commended them to us. Immortal, exposed to imminent peril, objects of divine care, Christ's regards, &c.

2. The request itself is for them to hearken.

May be considered as the language of the Christian minister—pious teacher—the affectionate parent—or of the blessed God himself, who wishes children to seek his favor, &c. Hearken seriously—attentively; hearken all of you, &c.

Observe,

II. *The Promise made.*

"I will teach you the fear of the Lord."

I will teach you,

1. In what it consists.

Two sorts of fear. A guilty and a filial fear; former Cain, Belshazzar, &c., had. The latter is the fear of offending him; a fear full of holy love to him, and which always produces obedience.

I will teach you,

2. Why you should fear him.

Because,

(1) He ought to be feared. So great, glorious, fearful: his smile, life; his frown, death, &c. He can raise to heaven, or sink to hell.

(2) He has commanded you to fear him See Psalm xxxiii. 8; Prov. xxii. 17; Isa viii. 13; Matt. x. 28; Rev. xiv. 7

(3) Angels fear him. Worship him with faces covered, &c.

(4) All good men have feared him. Noah, Abraham, Job, Joseph, &c.

I will teach you,

3. The advantages of fearing God.

There is no want to them that fear him. He will pity—have his eyes upon you for good. Angels will encamp round about you; it shall always be well with you; shall be the Lord's when he maketh up his jewels.

I will teach you,

4. How to obtain the fear of the Lord.

Read his holy word with seriousness and attention; pray daily to him in the name of Jesus Christ: avoid all evil company, and trust in the operation of his Holy Spirit

I will teach you,

5. What will become of you, if you do not fear him.

You will fear when it is too late; be the objects of his displeasure; and perish forever.

APPLICATION.

The evidences of fearing God will be heard in your conversation, and seen in your conduct at home, school, abroad, &c.

SKETCH CX.

NECESSITY OF EVANGELICAL RIGHTEOUSNESS.

"Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven."—*Matt.* v 20.

THE important and interesting character of Christ's Sermon on the Mount. It is the Christian's code of spiritual laws—a clear digest of the statutes of Christ's kingdom.

Let us notice,

I. *The Nature of that Righteousness which distinguished the Scribes and Pharisees.*

The scribes were the public writers and doctors of the law. The Pharisees were a sect of the Jews, who derived their name from Phariz, which signifies to separate, because they separated from the great body of the Jews, and professed superior sanctity. But in time they became flagrantly hypocritical and wicked, as is evident from the statements of Christ. They were divided into various minor sects, and some of them had adopted the most foolish and contemptible rites and customs. Yet the righteousness they professed at least, was,

1. According to God's law.

They professed sacredly to revere and obey the law of God.

2. It was very extensive.

They professed to regard the whole law, every jot and tittle.

3. It was connected with great devotion.

None prayed so often; had eighty set forms of prayer; never entered a house without prayer; prayed in the open air, &c.

They were distinguished,

4. For great self-denial.

Denied pleasures of all sorts, however innocent; often fasted, &c.

5. They liberally supported their religion.

Gave tithes of all they had &c., of things not demanded.

6. They were exceedingly zealous.

Make any sacrifice to extend it; compass sea and land to make one proselyte, &c. Yet, with all these striking traits, their righteousness was abhorred by God. For it was *carnal* in its nature, the result of pride and vain-glory. It was *hypocritical* in its character. They were insincere. It was all pretence and show. No reality. It was *selfish* in its spirit. Hence they devoured widows' houses, &c. It was deeply *injurious* to souls, &c.

II. *The Nature of that Righteousness necessary to our entering the Kingdom of God.*

It must "exceed" the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees. Ours must exceed theirs,

1. In its origin.

Must be implanted by the Spirit; the effect of the renewing grace of God; must be God's work within us.

2. In its nature.

A new heart, a righteousness of faith, fervent love, and sincerity of soul.

3. In its extent.

Embracing the whole of God's will; both the letter and the spirit of the commands, &c.

4. In its end.

Not the praise of men, but the honor of God; to glorify him in all things.

5. In its effects.

Fruits of righteousness to the glory of God, and of goodness to the human race; full of kindness, compassion, mercy, &c. Evangelical righteousness brings the soul into a state of holy resemblance to the blessed God. Now this is necessary to our entering the kingdom of God on earth being the Lord's appointed plan of salvation; and it is essential to our entering the kingdom of glory, for without this we have no meetness for heavenly felicity.

APPLICATION.

1. The revelation of this righteousness is given in God's blessed word.

2. It is obtained by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, who is made unto us "wisdom, righteousness," &c.

3. The necessity of this righteousness is obvious, both from the holy nature of God's law, and the purity indispensable to happiness, both in this world and in that which is to come.

SKETCH CXI.

THE UNSPEAKABLE GIFT.

"Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift."—2 *Cor.* ix. 15.

In this rich sentence there are three things which claim our attention:

I. *The Gift.*

II. *Its unspeakable Value.*

And,

III. *The grateful Thanks which it demands.*

Notice,

I. *The Gift referred to.*

The gift is the Lord Jesus Christ; given by God for the salvation of the world.

The term directs us,

1. To the free and gratuitous principles on which Christ was bestowed.

Not sent to rightful claimants, or those who had merited him; not bestowed as an act of bounty; but given as an act of grace, the result of pure spontaneous mercy, to the poor, wretched, and unworthy.

Consider,

2. The manner in which this gift was bestowed.

(1) By promise, as to our first parents, Abraham, &c.

(2) In types and shadows, as set forth in ancient sacrifices, &c. Lamb, scapegoat, &c. Rock, manna, &c.

(3) In prophecies. Jacob's Shiloh. The prophet like unto Moses, &c. Job's Redeemer, &c. To him bare all the prophet's witness.

(4) Actually. In the fulness of the times; at the time, place, manner, &c., foretold.

3. The great ends contemplated in this gift.

The divine glory—the world's redemption—and the overthrow of the powers of atan.

Consider,

II. *Its indescribable Excellency*

Hence said to be "unspeakable."

It is so,

1. In its origin.

The result of unspeakable love. God "so loved," but how much neither men nor angels can tell. It passeth knowledge.

2. In its worth.

All nature is impoverished to set him forth. He is the pearl of great price—morning star—sun of righteousness—the bread of life. Yea, he is the *life* as well as light of the world. He is the great centre of the universe; the fountain of all existence; the source of all blessedness; the great supreme good of all his creatures; earth's benefactor, and heaven's Lord and glory.

Unspeakable,

3. In its benefits.

Gift in which all blessings are comprehended. Gift of gifts. The basis and medium of all our mercies. Light, life, pardon, peace, adoption, holiness, and eternal glory.

4. In its durability.

All on earth frail and unstable; this abiding, changeless, and eternal. "The same yesterday," &c. "Throne forever" &c.

III. *The grateful Thanks which it demands.*

"Thanks be to God," &c.

1. Thanks to God should be the fervent overflowings of the heart.

God requires this. This gift demands the whole undivided gratitude of the heart. Every power and feeling should be employed in his praise.

2. Thanks to God should be constant.

We should bless him at all times, and in all places; praise should be the great business of life.

3. Thanks to God by all the redeemed in heaven will be eternal.

Every glorified spirit, with the whole of the heavenly hierarchy, will celebrate his praise in the highest strains forever and ever. Rev. vii. 9, &c.

APPLICATION.

Learn,

1. Heaven's greatest boon.
2. Man's richest treasure.
3. The believer's obvious duty.

SKETCH CXII

THE WAY OF SALVATION

PART I.

"The way of salvation."—*Acts* xvi. 17.

Of all terms that ever fell upon the ears of immortal beings, salvation is the most important and momentous. Of all subjects that ever engaged the powers of intellectual spirits, this is the most vast, comprehensive, and interesting. And it is interesting to all men everywhere. It is momentous to every child of Adam that ever lived. It claims the attention of all classes, and ranks, and degrees of men. It is as indispensably important to the learned, and the rich, and the great, as to the illiterate and the poor. Whatever may be man's age, or station, whatever his clime, or language, or color, he cannot be happy without an experimental acquaintance with this term. How necessary, then, that it should have an elevated position in our pulpit ministrations. We cannot honor God, or magnify the Saviour, or make immortal spirits happy, but by making known the glad tidings of salvation. This evening we purpose to elucidate, as clearly as possible, "the *way* of salvation."

Let us notice,

I. *The Divinity of its Origin.*

We are reminded by the apostle, that he who built all things is God. This is true of the framework of universal nature. Every thing throughout the vast universe has been called into existence by the omnific uncontrollable agency of God. Now this is equally true of the great work of redemption.

1. It is the overflowing of infinite benevolence and mercy.

"For God so loved the world," &c. John iii. 16. Yes, this is the great fountain from which flowed the streams of salvation. It is impossible to conceive of any other reason than that we have quoted—the love of God. The love of God in the sublimity of its height, in the profundity of its depth, in its illimitable breadth, and its eternal length—passing all understanding.

2. It is the manifestation of unsearchable wisdom and power.

Divine skill and almighty power carried out and embodied the gracious designs and movements of mercy in regard to man. And these illustrious perfections had never been so magnified as in the salvation of the world. Hence the apostle exclaims, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!" Rom. xi. 33. And while God is represented as effecting his creative works by the exertion of his voice, or by the skill of his hands, salvation only could be effected by the greatness of his arm, and by the energy of his almighty power. Eph. iii. 10; i. 19.

3. It is the harmony of all the moral attributes of Deity.

In the salvation of the world God has caused all his moral perfections to appear emblazoned with celestial glory. His truth and mercy, his compassion and holiness, all meet, to be magnified in the redemption of the world. And thus Deity appears full-orbed in all his uncreated grandeur and glory. Creation is full of God; Providence is the constant exhibition of God; but redemption is the brightness of his glory, the effulgence of him who is emphatically the fountain of light and blessedness.

> "Here the whole Deity is known,
> Nor dares the creature guess,
> Which of the glories brightest shone,
> The justice or the grace."

O yes, salvation is of God; it was an undertaking too great, a work too vast and mighty, to have been executed by the concentrated energies of all the creatures in the universe.

Consider salvation,

II. *As sacrificial in its Medium.*

In salvation a variety of interests had to be consulted. There was the holy character of God concerned, the claims of the divine law, and the ruined interests of guilty man. God could not overlook sin without his holiness being impeached, and without his laws being rendered null and void. But in the divinely appointed way of salvation, by the mediation of his Son, all interests have been consulted, and both the glory of God and the happiness of man secured.

In the gift of Christ, as a sacrifice for sin, we have,

1. An amazing instance of Divine love

Christ is the evidence of the love of God to us. No other proof could have exhibited it so clearly and fully. "Herein i

love," &c. Here is boundless, inconceivable love.

2. Here the purity of the Divine character was exhibited.

God so showed his hatred to sin, that, rather than it should go unpunished, he would punish it in the person of his Son. And nowhere can we learn so truly its hateful character as in the amazing value of the blood which was shed to redeem us from it. Yes, God vindicated the claims of holiness at the expense of the life of his only-begotten Son.

3. Here the sinner is honorably delivered from the fearful results of his crimes.

A Mediator has appeared between God and himself, and has borne in his own person the desert of sin. God can now be the justifier of the ungodly sinner who rests on the mediation of Christ. God is well pleased with the human nature of Christ—with the obedience of Christ—with the satisfaction of Christ, and waits to be gracious to all who come to him through Christ. Here is solid rock as a resting-place for the sinner; here is a sure refuge, a tower of defence, and everlasting salvation. Yes, this is the essence of the gospel, that Christ has loved us, and given himself for us. And there is hope and salvation in no other. Jesus alone can deliver from the wrath to come.

SKETCH CXIII.

THE WAY OF SALVATION

PART II.

Acts xvi. 17.

Having considered salvation in its divine origin, and sacrificial medium, let us now consider it,

III. *As the Subject of Revelation.*

God has not only devised and brought salvation to our world, but he has also revealed it in his holy word.

And this revelation is,

1. Clear and full.

It is not made known to us in the doubtful language of the ancient oracles, but in statements of the most clear and express character. Yes, every thing relating to salvation is so plainly and fully revealed, that none need err in the pathway to eternal glory. Read over the inimitably beautiful and simple discourses of Christ.

This revelation,

2. Is free and abundant.

The gospel is full of gracious truth and heavenly promises. It resembles a mighty overflowing stream passing through the dreary sterile desert. It makes known a rich and heavenly banquet, a feast of fat things, and freely invites the poor and starving to come, and to eat and drink without money and without price.

This revelation,

3. Is universal.

The gospel reveals and publishes a salvation to all the world, yea, to every creature. It proclaims an amnesty of pardon to every sinner, and peace and good will to every child of man. There is no restriction nor limitation in the gospel. It is tidings of great joy to all people.

Let us consider the way of salvation,

IV. *In its personal Application.*

As such, we observe,

1. It is only realized by faith.

While its provisions are universal and free to the whole world, yet faith is indispensable to a personal enjoyment of its blessings. Hence men are invited to repent and believe the gospel. Faith is that act of the mind by which its truths are implicitly credited, and its saving benefits cordially received. Unbelief puts away the overtures of divine love, and treats with contempt the exhibition of grace and mercy as exhibited in the cross of Christ.

In the personal realization of salvation, there is,

2. The entire removal of guilt and condemnation.

The voice of the gospel addresses the believing sinner: "Thy sins are forgiven thee, go in peace, and sin no more." It frees the mind from the painful consciousness of guilt, and condemnation is entirely removed. Sins are blotted out as a cloud and iniquities as a thick cloud. "Justified freely from all things," &c.

There is,

3. The renovation of the heart by purifying grace.

Salvation not only changes the state, but also sanctifies the nature. Old things pass away, and all things become new. Heart washed from its defilement, ove of sin, and the power of sin destroyed

There is,

4. The communication of spiritual peace and felicity

Mind serene, conscience in a state of holy peace. The heart full of the love of God, and the soul overflowing with joy unspeakable and full of glory.

Let us notice the way of salvation,

V. *In its glorious Consummation.*

That consummation will be one of,

1. Perfected purity.

Holiness without spot or blemish, or any such thing. Garments perfectly white. The entire image of God possessed.

It will be a consummation,

2. Of exalted glory.

The wise will inherit glory, a glorious crown, glorious society, and a glorious throne. Will be kings and priests unto God and the Lamb forever.

It will be a consummation.

3. Of interminable blessedness.

Fulness of joy, and pleasures for evermore. There is a cessation of all toil, and labor, and sorrow; and the possession of rivers of joy, the tree of life, &c.

Consummated salvation includes,

4. The glorification of body and soul forever.

The body is redeemed, and destined to a resurrection of beauty and immortal youth. Body and soul united in a glorified state are to enjoy the blessedness of eternal life together. Such is the salvation of the grace of God, and such are the declarations concerning it in the oracles of inspired and eternal truth

APPLICATION.

1. Has the subject of salvation occupied our attention? Do we understand it, as revealed in the Holy Scriptures?

2. Have we experienced its influences on our own souls? Are we the experimental recipients of its blessings?

3. Let us each endeavor, in our respective spheres, to show those around us "the way of salvation."

SKETCH CXIV.

THE LOSSES AND GAINS CONNECTED WITH RELIGION

PART I.

"For whosoever will save his life, shall lose it, and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it"—*Matt* xvi. 25

The religion of Christ is eminently a religion of self-denial. It commences with this, for Christ says, "If any man will come after me, and be my disciple, let him take up his cross and follow me." "If any man love father or mother, or houses or lands, or even his own life, more than me, he is not worthy of me." Christ's example was one of self-denial And the spirituality of Christ's holy laws necessarily involves acts of holy sacrifice and self-denial. But present self-denials shall be productive of future advantages, while present advantages, at the expense of religion, shall be followed by future disappointment and eternal loss. These are the truths expressed in the text, "For whosoever will save his life," &c.

Our subject may be considered the balance-sheet of profit and loss to the saint and sinner.

Notice,

I. *The Things of this Life Men may obtain by rejecting the Religion of Christ.*

1. They may obtain a considerable portion of earthly riches.

Success generally attends the undivided and persevering efforts of men. It is not invariably the case: but so often as to make it the rule, and failure the exception. Some men make haste to be rich; and benevolence, humanity, justice, are all sacrificed to effect it. Hence many, by fraud, oppression, insatiable avarice, &c., add field to field, &c. It has ever been so. Ancient tyrants and conquerors thus enlarged their dominions.

2. They may obtain the sensual gratifications of life.

Some have denied the pleasurableness of sin. This is a mistake. Our first parents saw the fruit, that it was fair to the eyes, &c. Sin has its honey, flowery meads, and downy beds. Moses rejected the pleasures of sin.

3. They may obtain the distinctions of worldly honor and praise.

The world has her smiles, her acclamations, her distinctions, and her crowns She has her garlands to bestow upon the successful competitors for her favor; and how thousands pant to obtain them. No toil too great, no efforts too strenuous, no sacrifice too dear, to make for them. These, I presume, are the chief advantages to be gained by rejecting the religion of Christ.

Let us see, then,

II *In what Respects these Advantages shall be lost to them.*

"Whosoever shall save his life shall lose it."

1. They shall often be interrupted in their enjoyment of them.

It is not settled and sure good which they obtain; it is not undisturbed enjoyment. The preached word interrupts them. A celebrated monarch once expressed this, when he said, "I hate him for he always prophesies evil concerning me." Bodily afflictions interrupt them; fearful forebodings interrupt them; the scourges of conscience interrupt them; reflection, whether as to past, present, or future, interrupts them. There are bitter ingredients mingled with their cups, which often render what is otherwise gratifying distracting indeed.

2. Sometimes they are overtaken with overwhelming calamities.

What did our first parents gain by eating of the forbidden fruit? What did the old world gain by their atheism and revellings? What did Lot gain by choosing the well-watered plains of Sodom? What did Gehazi gain by his talents of silver and changes of raiment? What did Haman gain by his elevated dignity, &c.? What did Belshazzar gain by his midnight revellings and carousings, and by polluting the vessels of the Lord's sanctuary? What did Judas gain by his thirty pieces of silver? What did Ananias and Sapphira gain by reserving what they had promised to the Holy Ghost? Or, finally, what did Herod gain by allowing himself to be intoxicated with the deifying and blasphemous applauses of the people? The sequel of each case will illustrate the text, that a man "may gain his life, and yet lose it."

3. They must all necessarily be forfeited at death.

See the rich fool. These things belong to this world, and to this world only. Death makes the rich man poor as the beggar; brings down the grandee of earth to a level with the peasant. We brought nothing into this world, &c.

4. They produce the most appalling consequences in the eternal world.

"Whatsoever a man soweth," &c. Refer to the conversation between Abraham and the rich man, Luke xvi. 24, &c. Inordinate love of the things of this life inevitably closes the gates of the life to come. How fearfully true, "That whosoever will save his life," &c.

APPLICATION.

1. The danger of worldly-mindedness. A man may perish without being profane and impious, &c.

2. The great end of life To lay up treasure in heaven, &c

3. The extreme folly of rejecting true religion.

SKETCH CXV

THE LOSSES AND GAINS CONNECTED WITH RELIGION

PART I.

Matt. xvi. 25

HAVING considered the former part of the subject, and stated,

I. *What Things may be obtained by rejecting the Religion of Christ;*

And,

II. *In what Respects these Advantages shall be lost to them:*

Let us now consider,

III. *What we may be called to sacrifice in becoming the Disciples of Jesus.*

"And whosoever will lose his life," &c

Christ called his disciples,

1. To lose all will and choice with respect to this world's good.

True religion consists in the subjection of the mind to God. In acknowledging the right of God to place men where he pleases, and to dispense what favors he pleases. Child no right to direct the parent. Contentment is one grand principle of genuine piety. To be without carefulness. "To take no thought what we shall eat," &c. "To be careful for nothing," &c. Matt. vi. 25–31; Phil. iv. 6.

Now this will require the constant mortification of self.

We may be called to lose,

2. The approbation of friends.

True religion is peaceable, and gentle, and lovely, yet it often becomes the source of strife and bitterness. See Matt. x. 34 &c. We cannot expect our ungodly friends to love a religion which condemns them and is in entire opposition to them

We may be called to endure,

3. The frowns of the world.

World loves her own. Her smiles and honors she bestows upon her friends. Hence she has her reproaches and sneers for the pious. We may be charged with fanaticism, as Paul was. "Much learning," &c. With weakness of mind; with superstitious and childish fears and dread.

We may be called, also,

4. To lose our liberties in the countries where we dwell.

Often property confiscated, fines, imprisonments, chains, &c.

5. Life itself.

Thousands have had to die for their religion. See John xvi. 2; Luke xxi. 16; Heb. xi. 33–38. Now this is all we can be compelled to sacrifice. They who kill the body have no power to kill the soul.

Let us notice then,

IV. *In what Respects we shall find again the Things we sacrifice.*

"And whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it."

It does not mean literally—not find the same friends, same goods, same life, &c.

In the midst of these sacrifices,

1. We have what is better than life.

A man may endure what is worse than death, and enjoy what is better than life. Remorse and despair is worse than death, and the loving-kindness of God is better than life. The disciple has the enjoyment of the Holy Ghost.

The peace of Christ, "In the world ye shall," &c.

2. We are attaining a greater assimilation to the life of Christ.

Now Christ is the perfection of beauty. To be like him is the soul's highest dignity and happiness. Now this is attained by self-denial and sacrifices. He lost all that worldly men estimate; he renounced riches, pleasures, honors, and his own life. It is indispensable that we have fellowship with his sufferings. Made like Christ. We must suffer with him, if we would reign with him.

3. All our sacrifices terminate at death.

Then the Christian can bid adieu to all sorrow and distress. Poverty, reproach, persecution, enemies, are all left on this side of Jordan.

4. We shall be superabundantly rewarded at the last day.

Yes, Paul thus triumphed when he exclaimed, "I have fought a good fight," &c. Stephen, when laying down his life, saw "heaven opened," &c. Jesus, when he had endured the cross, was exalted to the right hand, &c. And this is the great cheering promise, "Be thou faithful," &c. Behold the heavenly company arrayed in white robes, palms in their hands, and crowns on their heads. Who are they—whence came they? These all came out of great tribulation, &c. Rev. vii. 14.

This is the apostle's estimate, "These light afflictions which are but for a moment," &c.

APPLICATION.

1. Who will be Christ's disciples? Who will have Christ's yoke with Christ's favor; Christ's reproach with his smile Christ's cross with Christ's crown?

2. If any are indisposed to make the sacrifices he demands, think of the world's vanity, uncertainty of life, solemnity of judgment, and the awfulness of eternity.

3. If any are undecided. Now weigh the matter seriously. Weigh the mortal against the immortal; weigh time against eternity; weigh heaven against hell.

4. Let there now be a universal yielding of hearts to God. Fall prostrate at his feet; receive his gospel; behold his cross, and this evening take his yoke, and ye shall find rest unto your souls.

SKETCH CXVI

THE MOMENTOUS WORD

"Eternity."—*Isai.* lvii. 15.

This all-momentous word is only to be found once in the whole of the inspired pages. Yet how unconcernedly we often use it. It is utterly incomprehensible. No finite mind can grasp it. We are, however, intimately, and indissolubly connected with it. It behooves us, therefore, to do all we can to understand as much of it as possible.

Let us inquire, then,

I. *What we understand by Eternity?*

Eternity is duration without limits. As such it has neither beginning nor end. In this sense it is only applicable to God, for Jehovah is alone truly and properly eternal. Other beings, as angels and men have a sort of prospective eternity are im-

mortal, and will exist forever; but as they were not always in existence, they are not strictly eternal. Eternity has been likened to a ring, which has no beginning or end. Eternity is not unaptly said to resemble the scene presented to the mariner when out at sea, when he looks abroad in every direction, and perceives nothing but the waters of the mighty ocean Eternity necessarily includes duration beyond all that figures can describe or ideas conceive. There are a certain number of grains of sand on the sea-shore; a certain number of drops in the mighty ocean; a certain number of blades of grass, and leaves upon the trees; and, were myriads of ages to pass between the annihilation of each of these, there would finally cease to be a grain of sand, &c. &c. But eternity would then be no nearer its termination than at the first, and would still be duration without limits

Let us, then,

II. *Consider some things directly connected with it.*

1. The existence of man shall be eternal.

The soul shall never die; and the deceased body shall be raised again to immortality and endless life.

2. The believer's happiness will be eternal.

Hence we read of eternal redemption and eternal salvation. Heb. v. 9, and ix. 12. Eternal weight of glory. 2 Cor. iv. 17. Eternal inheritance. Heb. ix. 15. Eternal life, &c. John vi. 54, and x. 28; Rom. vi. 23.

3. The sinner's wo will be eternal.

Hence we read of eternal damnation, Matt. iii. 29; eternal fire, Jude 7. Also we read of everlasting punishment, Matt. xxv. 46; everlasting destruction, 2 Thess. i. 9.

Let us then,

III. *Make some useful Improvement of it*

The subject should lead us,

1. To high and sublime views of Deity.

He, and he only, inhabiteth eternity. How great and unsearchable is God!

We see,

2. The dignity and preciousness of man.

A candidate for eternity; an immortal deathless being. "What shall it profit a man," &c.

3. The evanescence and shortness of time

A vapor, shadow, thing of naught, &c.

4. The vast importance of life.

Time of escape from eternal wrath; of preparation for glory; only seed-time for a harvest of blessedness or wo. "Redeeming the time," &c.

5. The solemnity of death.

The outlet of life! the gate of eternity, passage to heaven or to hell!

Let the subject of eternity daily impress our minds; let us do every thing in reference to eternity, Preach, hear, pray, live, &c. How necessary to be serious, wise sincere, watchful, &c.

SKETCH CXVII.

UNBELIEF LIMITING GOD.

"And limited the Holy One of Israel."—*Psalm* lxxviii. 41.

The text refers to an event connected with the history of the Israelites, which is recorded, Numb. xiv. 1–4. The spies had just brought an evil report of the good land, and had represented the inhabitants as giants, on account of which the people lifted up their voice and wept, and said, "Would God that we had died in the land of Egypt, or in this wilderness;" and they proposed selecting a captain and returning again. Thus did they turn their backs, and tempted God, and "limited the Holy One of Israel."

Now let us notice,

I. *In what Way we may limit the Holy One of Israel.*

To limit is to set bounds to his operations; to circumscribe or confine him in his ability to effect certain purposes or works.

Now God is often limited,

1. In the extent and freeness of his mercy.

The Jews could not conceive of publicans and sinners being interested in Messiah's regards. Eldest son in the parable of the prodigal. And even the church doubted when they heard of Saul's conversion. Whenever we suppose any case of guilt too great and aggravated to receive mercy, we clearly "limit the Holy One," &c.

2. The penitent sinner often does this as to the ability and willingness of God to save.

"If *thou canst* do any thing for us, have compassion," &c. Matt. ix. 22. "Lord, if thou *wilt* thou canst make clean," Matt. viii. 2. How often heavy-laden sin-sick souls stumble over either the one or the other of these difficulties—the power or willingness of Christ to save.

3. The believer in trouble often does this in confining God to a certain mode of deliverance.

Jacob, Gen. xlii. 38. David, for his child, wept and fasted, &c. Martha, Lord, if thou hadst been here, &c. Paul besought the Lord thrice, &c. How often have we done the same. Dictated to the Lord how he should deliver us, &c.

4. We often do this in the contractedness of our prayers.

The promises are exceedingly great, precious, and absolute. Yet how feeble our desires, how bounded our requests, how weak our faith, how confined our requests. "If we have not, it is because we ask not," &c. "Hitherto ye have asked nothing," &c. "Prove me now," &c. Mal. iii. 11.

Let us notice,

II. *The Evil of Limiting the Holy One of Israel.*

To limit the Holy One of Israel is,

1 To bring down the Creator to the standard of the creature.

The powers of the highest orders of creatures are limited. The perfections of God are infinite and boundless. "As high as the heavens are above the earth," &c. It is presumption to measure him by the standard of finite capacity.

2. It is disbelieving his holy word.

He has declared he can do every thing. "Able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think," Eph. iii. 20. He said to Abraham, "I am the Almighty," &c. Gen. xvii. 1. Jesus said, "With God all things are possible," Matt. xix. 16.

To limit God,

3. Is ungrateful reflection upon him for past mercies.

Has he not done infinitely more than we expected, and been exceedingly better than our fears. Guided when there was no light; guarded in imminent peril; delivered from the very jaws of death and destruction.

To limit God, is,

4. To limit our mercies and enjoyment

He says, "Be it unto you according to your faith."

Unbelief closes his hand, and turns his face away from us, Jas. i. 6. Excluded those of old from Canaan. Strong faith enriches the experience, and fills the soul with all the joys of the Holy Spirit. To limit God is to bring leanness into our souls, &c.

APPLICATION.

Learn,

1. The importance of strong and living faith in God.

2. The best means of retaining and increasing his, is, close acquaintance with the Divine word—constant reliance on Christ's intercession—and frequent prayer for Divine influence. "Lord, I believe, help thou mine unbelief."

SKETCH CXVIII

CHRIST A TESTATOR.

"For where a testament is, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator."—*Heb.* ix. 17

SEE the preceding verses, also Christ's address at the institution of the supper Matt. xxvi. 27, &c.

Let us consider,

I. *The Testator.*

The Testator is the Lord Jesus Christ.

As such we may notice,

1. His original and underived riches and glory.

The essential Son of God, Lord of angels, Prince of glory, heir of all things, &c.

2. His assumed humanity.

Enshrined in flesh, and dwelt among us; truly man, of the seed of Abraham; found in fashion as a man; made in all things like unto his brethren, &c.

3 His mediatorial character.

Occupying a midway place between God and us. His hands upon both. Medium of God's approach to us, and of our access to him. The only Mediator. Acceptable to God, and entirely suited to us

Observe,

II. *The Testament.*

The testament, or will of Christ is

1. Clearly revealed in the Gospel.

The Gospel is not only a history of

events, a record of facts, a code of laws, and system of doctrines, but also a legacy of invaluable blessings. "Search the Scriptures," &c. "Life and immortality are brought," &c.

2. The legacy bequeathed is salvation.

He came expressly to save us from our sins. To procure eternal salvation. And this includes all the unsearchable riches of grace here, and all the infinite glories of the world to come.

3. The blessings bequeathed become ours by faith.

He that believeth shall be saved. 'Not by works of righteousness," &c. "To as many as received him," &c. John i. 12. We are all the children of God by faith. "And if children, then heirs," &c.

Then observe,

III. *The Necessity of the Testator's Death.*

"For where a testament is, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator."

1. The testator obtained the legacies he bequeathed by his death.

Had he not died, grace could not have been bestowed. His life and obedience were necessary, but we are "redeemed only by his blood." "It behooved him to suffer," &c. His death ransomed our souls to God. "Redeemed not with corruptible things," &c.

2. The legacy is not due until the Testator's death is proved.

Now it is the great declaration of the Gospel, that Christ has died for our sins. The death of Christ is demonstrated from the concurrent testimony of profane as well as sacred writers.

3. In laying claim to the legacy we must principally refer to his death.

Faith must have respect to the whole Gospel testimony, but especially to his agony and cross. Faith in his blood—"He loved me, and gave himself for me"

> "'Tis all my hope and all my plea,
> For me the Saviour died."

APPLICATION.

1. Invite the wretched dying sinner to this great and glorious legacy.

2. Urge believers to keep their titles clear, and to grow in meetness for its consummated blessedness.

3. In prayer, meditation, and at the Lord's table, especially think upon the Testator's death, that ove to him may be inflamed, &c. "The love of Christ constraineth us," &c. "We love him," &c.

SKETCH CXIX.

ENCOURAGEMENT TO PRAYER.

'Hitherto ye have asked nothing in my name ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full. —*John* xvi. 24.

THE superaboundings of Divine grace towards us. God desirous of our complete happiness and salvation. Fulness of his love and mercy. How he invites, beseeches, and expostulates. More ready to give than we are to receive.

Notice,

I. *The Expostulation.*

II. *The Direction.*

And,

III. *The Promise*

Notice,

I. *The Expostulation.*

"Hitherto ye have asked nothing," &c

1. We have asked for little instead of much of the Divine goodness.

He wants to bestow all good things, &c. He says, "Prove me," &c.

2. We have asked seldom instead of often.

He says, continue in prayer; pray without ceasing.

3. We have asked in doubt instead of strong faith.

He says, Be not faithless, but believing. "Whatsoever ye ask in faith, nothing doubting," &c. James i. 6; Heb x. 22.

Observe,

II. *The Direction.*

"Ask," &c.

1. Our desires must be expressed.

We must not only wish, but *ask*, &c. He will be inquired of, &c. He loves to *hear* prayer. He is near to them that *call* upon him. Our desires must be embodied in words.

2. Our prayers must be in Christ's name.

He is the only Mediator between God and us His death our plea. His intercession our hope. We must do all in Christ's name. See Rev. viii. 3; Col. iii 17.

3. We must ask enlargedly for abundance of blessings.

Hitherto ye have asked nothing &c

Now we must ask,

(1) At all times. Morning, noon, and evening. Yea, be instant in prayer.

(2) For all sorts of blessings. Temporal, spiritual, and eternal.

(3) For an abundance of each blessing. "Open thy mouth wide," &c.

(4) With all sorts of prayer; ejaculatory, closet, family, and public, &c.

Then observe,

III. *The Promise.*

"And ye shall receive," &c.

Now consider, in reference to this promise,

1. The Divine ability.

He is able to do more than we can either ask or think. Nothing too hard, &c.

2. The Divine benevolence and grace.

God is love. As a father pitieth, &c. He delighteth in mercy. If he spared not his own Son, &c. Rom. viii. 32.

3. The Divine truth and immutability.

His word has gone forth, and cannot be withdrawn. Not a man that he should lie, &c. He is the changeless Jehovah. Word of the Lord abideth forever, &c.

4. The Divine dealings with his people in every age.

When were his praying people turned empty away? When left to pine away and die? When did he forget to be gracious? &c. Abraham, Moses, Elijah, importunate widow, &c.

5. Refer to your own experience.

If ye had not, it was because, &c. Then ask and receive, that your joy may be full. If we ask largely, we shall have joys arising from abundance—acceptance—assurance; yea, joy unspeakable and full of glory.

SKETCH CXX.

THE FEAST OF HARVEST

"And the feast of harvest."—*Exod.* xxiii. 16.

EVERY thing is lovely and interesting in its season. All must have felt the power of that sacred proverb, "A word spoken in season, how good is it!" The Redeemer always seemed to adapt his discourses to the seasons, and the audiences he addressed. It is obvious that our minds are capable of being more deeply impressed at one time than another. In sickness we feel more powerfully our mutability. Near the grave, our mortality, &c. Seasons and feelings should be appropriate with each other. Hence we are enjoined in the day of prosperity to rejoice, while in the day of adversity we are to consider. In ancient times God was pleased to appoint services and festivals for the commemoration and improvement of seasons and events. There were in particular three general feasts, that of the passover, by which they kept up a lively remembrance of their deliverance from Egypt; the feast of weeks, or pentecost, seven weeks after the passover, when the first-fruits were presented to God; and the feast of harvest, or tabernacles, to celebrate the goodness of God in the abundance of his bounty. Mercies which demanded their grateful services, are certainly worthy of ours.

Let us, then, consider, in reference to the harvest,

I. *The Instruction it communicates.*

What instructions do we derive from a contemplation of the harvest?

1. It exhibits the wonderful power of God.

Our minds are not sufficiently impressed with this. We stand astonished at the power of the storm and tempest, yet are liable to pass over the silent, yet not less energetic, influence of Jehovah's power. Christ's miracle on the sea of Galilee did not exhibit his power more than when he silently multiplied the loaves, and fed thousands in the desert. How astonishing the energy by which a few grains produce an increase of thirty, sixty, and a hundred fold.

2. We have an establishment of the faithfulness and truth of God.

God's displeasure was once displayed in bringing upon the world a flood of waters. But afterwards he made a covenant not again to destroy it. Gen. viii. 21, 22. And he has been faithful to his covenant. Never failed. In the harvest another proof of it.

3. We have a manifestation of the goodness and bounty of God.

Wherefore does Jehovah meet all the wants of his creatures? It is because the Lord is good, and his tender mercies are over all his works. See the beautiful description, Psalm lxv. 9–13.

4. It displays the mercy and forbearance of God.

For whom does he send the profusion of his bounty? For the holy, upright, and obedient? No; but for a world in arms against him; for rebels against his authority; for sensualists, worldlings, blasphemers, infidels, &c. He sends his rain upon the evil and the good, the wicked and the just.

5. It shows us the connection between means and the end.

All our blessings are from God. Nothing more evident than this. See Hos. ii. 21. This applies to every thing. In nature, providence, and grace. Yet exertion is ours. We must plough and sow, &c., before we can reap. So, in the acquisition of knowledge, or in the attainment of salvation. We can only reap everlasting life by sowing to the Spirit.

Let us consider, in reference to the harvest,

II. *What Feelings it should produce*

It should produce feelings,

1. Of deep humiliation.

God's goodness should humble us. Our consciousness of being utterly unworthy should prostrate us in the dust. Abraham repented himself in dust and ashes. Prodigal said he had sinned against heaven, &c. The centurion said, I am not worthy, &c. We are not worthy of the least, &c.

2. Of heartfelt gratitude.

Bless the Lord, O our souls, &c. Ps. ciii. 1, &c. Ought to rejoice in his loving-kindness, &c. Hence the propriety of recognising at every meal the donor of all our mercies.

We should feel,

3. Our constant dependence upon God.

"In all our ways acknowledge him," &c. We should see his hand in every thing; and endeavor to glorify him in all we do. In sowing, ploughing, reaping, &c.

We should feel,

4. A constant desire to please him.

The inquiry should be, "What shall I render to the Lord," &c. What does God demand from us? Our hearts, and lives, and all. "I beseech you, brethren, by the mercies of God," &c.

Consider,

III. *What practical Influence the Subject should exert upon us.*

1. To labor for the provision suited to our souls.

There is other grain, other fields, other bread. God has sent us a harvest of Gospel blessings, an abundance of the bread of life, "Labor not," &c. John vi. 27. "Lord, evermore give us this bread!" "One thing is needful," &c.

We should be excited,

2. To do good in our respective spheres and stations in life.

How God blesses us and fills our cup. "Be ye followers of God," &c. Try to relieve the wants and alleviate the miseries around you. "Be blessings to the poor," &c. "To do good and communicate," &c.

3. Prepare for the final harvest.

The field is the world; harvest is near; full of wheat and tares; angels the reapers. Speedily the command will be given—"Thrust in the sickle," &c. Eternity is suspended upon it. Wheat will be gathered into the garner, &c. Tares burnt, &c. Now how do we stand What is our character? Are we prepared, &c. Repentance is necessary; faith is necessary, being in Christ is necessary.

APPLICATION.

1. Let us gratefully enjoy the bounties of Providence. Many are abusing, many forgetting, &c.

2. Let us be especially anxious about the blessings of eternal life.

3. Let us always act in reference to the final harvest of the world.

SKETCH CXXI.

THE ISRAELITES AT BOCHIM

"And it came to pass, when the angel of the Lord spoke these words unto all the children of Israel, that the people lifted up their voices and wept. And they called the name of that place Bochim, and they sacrificed there unto the Lord."—*Judges* ii. 4, 5.

By referring to Exod. xxiii. 32, we shall see the occasion of these words. God had expressly commanded that when the Israelites entered Canaan they were to make no covenant with the inhabitants, nor to allow them to dwell in the land, lest they should be a snare to them, and cause them to sin against God. In direct violation of God's express authority they did allow many of them to enter into league with them, and thus incurred the displeasure of the Most High. Hence the angel of the Lord appeared to them at Bochim, and

delivered the following address. See ver. 1–4.

Let us consider,

I. *The Speaker.*

II. *The Address.*

And,

III. *The Effects produced.*

Let us notice,

I. *The Speaker.*

"He is styled the Angel of the Lord." It is obvious that he was not a created intelligence. His phraseology is that of God. See ver. 1. He speaks of having brought them out of Egypt, of having sworn to the fathers, of his covenant, &c. Their rebellion he charges as against himself. Now it is clear, therefore, that it was the same illustrious personage who,

(1) Appeared to Hagar, and said, I will multiply thy seed, &c. Gen. xvi. 10, &c.

(2) To Abraham, and called out of heaven, saying, "Lay not thine hand," &c. Gen. xxii. 11.

(3) To Jacob, and wrestled with him till break of day, &c. Gen. xxxii. 25.

(4) To Joshua, at Gilgal, as captain of the Lord's host. Josh. v. 13. Now the text is connected with that, for it is said the angel of the Lord came up from Gilgal, that is, this was his next visible appearance among them.

(*a*) This was doubtless no other than the Son of God who thus appeared to the patriarchs before his incarnation, who is styled, the angel of the covenant, the angel of his presence, &c.; and who doubtless was referred to, Exod. xxiii. 20.

(*b*) It is certain that all the affairs of this world are, and ever have been, in his hands. He alone hath revealed Jehovah to us. And through him alone all our world's transactions have been managed. Then the speaker was the divine Son of God, the Creator, Ruler, and universal Lord of earth. The same speaker addresses us, the Scriptures are the word of Christ, Gospel, Gospel of Christ, &c.

Let us notice,

II. *The Address delivered.*

The address referred,

1. To God's past goodness.

He had brought them out of Egypt into the good land, ver. 1. Now this is equally applicable to us. Look back upon your Egyptian condition. See your present state. How has it been effected? The Lord hath saved you, &c. His grace has produced the blessed change, &c. We should never forget this. Sabbaths and services should reimpress us with it. He referred,

2. To the duties God had enjoined.

Not to make a league with the wicked idolatrous nations, &c., but to throw down their altars, &c. Exod. xxiii. 32, and ver. 2

Now these duties were solemnly binding upon them.

(1) Their connection with the true God obligated them. Gratitude should have inspired them to do this.

(2) Their own safety required it. This was the reason God assigned, Exod. xxiii. 33. Lest they should prove a snare, &c. Now Jesus has given us similar injunctions. We are to come out from the world. To be separate—to forsake all, and to follow him. We are not to be leagued with the enemies of God; we are not to be of the world, even as Christ was not of it. John xvii. 16. What did Lot obtain by it? What Solomon—what Peter?

In this address,

3. There is an important inquiry instituted.

"Why have ye done this?" He appealed to them for the cause of their transgression. Most likely they had acted from a spirit of *indifference—unbelief*, as to God's threatenings—*covetousness*, that they might obtain their tribute, &c. Have not our sinful defects arisen from similar causes?

Observe, in this address,

4. The punishment denounced.

"They shall be as thorns in your sides," &c. ver. 3. In plain words, he allows them to reap as they had sown. They would not expel them; well, they shall not be driven out. They had leagued with them; well, they shall have them near enough, even in their sides as goads. So Samson, so Adoni-bezek, so Ananias and Sapphira, so Herod. By allowing us to have our own desires, God can make us utterly wretched.

Observe,

III. *The Effects produced.*

1. They experienced the power of the truth on their minds.

They did not trifle, or reject the address. It came home to them; it struck like a hammer; burned like fire. Came with irresistible energy, &c.

2. It produced extreme sorrow

They wept—wept aloud. They all wept. God looks with complacency on the mourning soul, "A broken and a contrite heart," &c

3. It produced supplication.

"They lifted up their voices," &c. Godly sorrow is invariably connected with prayer. And most likely also they confessed before God. "If we say that we have no sin," &c. "But if we confess," &c.

4. They publicly sacrificed unto the Lord.

Set about duty at once. Earnestly drew near to God in the way of his ordinances. How beautiful the gradation: they heard, felt, wept, prayed, and began to serve God. Now let this be our course. Satan would have us go further from God. Our hearts would despond. But God says, "Draw nigh me," &c. "Return, O ye backsliding children," &c.

APPLICATION.

1. Let us cultivate devout affection for the commandments of the Lord. It is our true interest to serve and fear him.

2. Let us dwell in the vale of humiliation. We ought to have our Bochims, places of weeping, &c.

3. Let us daily return to the Lord, and seek his forgiving mercy and preserving grace.

SKETCH CXXII.

DIVINE PARDON.

"He will abundantly pardon."—*Isaiah* lv. 7

THE pardon of sin is the foundation blessing of all the enjoyments and privileges the Gospel presents. In the text God shows how freely he waits to impart this blessing. For he will abundantly pardon. In this God acts like himself. All he does has a peculiar impress upon it, which does not belong to the works of any creature. His mode of pardoning is as much above ours, as the heavens are higher than the earth. See ver. 8.

It is not, therefore, on the Author, nature, source, and medium of pardon, that we shall dwell, but on the superiority of the mode of divine over human forgiveness. For Jehovah abundantly pardons.

I. *Consider the inconceivable Disparity between God and those whom he Pardons.*

He is the eternal, self-existent, high and lofty One, who inhabiteth eternity. The objects of his compassionate regard are as nothing before him. He in the highest heavens, they upon the earth. Now, no such difference can exist with us and our fellow-creatures. We are all in most respects equal. All distinctions therefore fictitious

Notice

II. *The Contrast between the Offences committed against God and Men.*

Crime is aggravated,

(1) By the dignity of him against whom we sin; and,

(2) By our obligations to him. Now the being we have offended is not only the greatest, but the best of beings. Our Creator, Preserver, our Redeemer, Fountain of all mercies, Great Donor of all our blessings. "Every good and perfect gift," &c. Now we cannot, therefore, be as deeply obligated to any being as we are to God, and our sins against him are peculiarly aggravated and heinous.

Consider,

III. *The divine Independency and Power to punish.*

In society we have often to balance favors against offences, or we cannot punish without injuring ourselves. Not so with God. He owes us no favors. He neither needs us nor our services. He can always punish. Yet notwithstanding this, he "abundantly pardons."

Contrast,

IV. *The Manner of human and divine Pardon.*

Man forgives with difficulty. He has many passions to subdue, &c. A work of great moral exertion. Often requires time to be able to do it. God pardons freely and with delight. His pardoning grace is as free as the rain, or copious dew. Al his nature disposes him to do it.

V. *Man pardons generally for the present and only conditionally; God pardons fully graciously, and forever.*

Blots out as a cloud, &c. As a stone cast into the sea, &c. Isaiah xliii. 25. xxxviii. 17. Jer. l. 20. Micah vii. 18.

VI. *Contrast human and divine Pardon in the Number and Character of Offences forgiven.*

We only forgive certain offences. Often speak of things unpardonable, &c. God forgives all degrees and manner of guilt

Thousand-pence debtors, &c. "Though as scarlet," &c. "All manner of sin and blasphemy," &c.

VII. *Contrast human and divine Pardon in their Repetition.*

Men may forgive once; perhaps again; but then the difficulty is greatly increased. A continued course of offences has steeled the hearts of parents, &c. God multiplies pardon. We need it every day. His forgiving acts must constantly be renewed, or we should perish. Daily we must confess, and obtain mercy.

VIII. *Contrast human and divine Pardons in their Results.*

A king pardons an old minister of state who has conspired against him, but he never receives him again into favor. A friend may pardon a deceitful and treacherous companion, but he never associates with him again. But God takes the rebel to his palace, the traitor to his heart. Receives the enemy as his child. Adopts, enriches, blesses, dignifies, holds the most intimate intercourse with him, and then receives him to his own eternal glory.

APPLICATION.

1. How glorious and blessed is the Lord our God. How rich his goodness, how great his mercy.

2. What poor creatures the best of men are. How frail. How partially sanctified.

3. How important pardon is. Without it we are necessarily guilty, wretched, perishing.

4. How freely and gratuitously it may be obtained. God waits. Jesus has died, and is the Mediator between God and us. And whosoever seeks by faith and repentance, "he will abundantly pardon."

5. A remembrance of such love and goodness will greatly aggravate the misery of the incorrigible in a future state.

SKETCH CXXIII.

THE CURE OF THE IMPOTENT MAN.

"In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk."—*Acts* iii. 6.

See the preceding verses. Peter and John went to the temple. The man seeking alms. The reply; then the cure wrought.

Let us notice,

I. *The Condition of the Man.*

He was,

1. An afflicted cripple

Unable to walk, &c. Emblem of the sinner.

2. He had been afflicted from his birth.

So sin is hereditary. Naturally depraved, &c.

3. His affliction had lasted for many years.

He was about forty years old. Sin never cures itself. Grows with our growth. Go further and further from God.

4. He was in circumstances of destitution.

Disease and poverty often go together. Sin produces every species of misery. Has totally robbed us. Left us poor, wretched, &c.

5. After all, his case was not utterly hopeless.

He was alive. In the way of Divine Providence. Now this is the state of sinners in this life. Not dead, not lost, &c. Within reach of mercy, &c. In the field of hope.

Notice,

II. *The Cure which was effected.*

1. It was effected by the power of God.

Nothing else could avail. So in the restoration of the soul to God. Gospel the power of God. This alone can soften, convince, renew, &c.

2. It was effected through the merits of Christ.

"In the name of Jesus," &c. God deals with us through Christ. Salvation in his name, and in his only. All blessings through him. He is made to us "wisdom righteousness," &c.

3. It was effected through human instrumentality.

The apostle was the agent employed The Gospel treasure is put into earthen vessels, &c. God employs men to be fishers, &c. "To turn men," &c.

4. The cure was instantaneous.

It was effected immediately. God only has to speak and say, "Thy sins be forgiven," &c. He says, "Be thou whole."

5. The cure was gratuitous.

Man was poor, and had nothing to pay Just suited to his case, &c. So the Gospel, without money, &c. Isaiah lv. 1.

6. It was real and permanent.

He was radically healed Could be no deception, &c. Public, &c. So the Gos

pel really restores, truly changes. Effects obvious, &c.

III. *The Results which followed.*

1. He *stood* up. 2. He *walked*. 3. *Leaped*. 4. *Praised God*. 5. Held *the apostles*, no doubt from love and gratitude, &c. 6. *The people glorified God.*

How applicable to converted souls. They are elevated from the prostration of sin. They walk in God's statutes. They dance for joy. They bless God. They unite with his people. And the world seeing their good works glorify God.

APPLICATION.

1. See man's ruined state.
2. His only help, and,
3. The effect of grace upon the heart.

SKETCH CXXIV

THE VALUE OF THE SOUL.

PART I.

"For what shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul."—*Mark* viii. 36.

THAT the soul of man is of immense value, is obvious to all. Yet were we to judge by the conduct of men, we might conclude that it was of no worth whatever. Every thing seems to occupy the attention of mankind, rather than the improvement and salvation of the soul. Happy shall we be, if we can suggest any thing by which attention to this subject may be effected.

Let us, then,

Contemplate the incalculable Value of the Soul.

The value of the soul is clearly deducible from many considerations.

I. *The Spirituality of its Nature.*

The soul is an immaterial creature, and thus stands allied to the angels, who are described as spirits, and as flames of fire. The body is an exquisitely beautiful structure—the hands, the countenance, the eye, &c. How wonderful the brain; yet all this is matter, a beautified structure of earth. But the soul is spiritual, and hence more dignified in its nature. This is clear, when we consider, that,

1. The soul is capable of thought and reflection, matter is not.

A stone or clod of earth cannot think Alter its form or shape; let it be quiescent, or in rapid motion; still it cannot think. Refine it, let it be as subtle as the electric fluid; apply to it all the discoveries of chemistry, yet it is matter still.

2. The soul retains its powers though the body be mutilated or decaying.

Many have lost limbs, and many have been worn down by disease, and yet their mental powers have been as clear and vigorous as ever. The soul's immateriality,

3. Is fully established by revelation.

When God had formed the body of earth, "he breathed into his nostrils," &c. The preacher says, at death, the body returns to the dust, and the spirit to God, &c. Job says, "There is a spirit in man," &c. Stephen said, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit," &c. Paul said, "To be absent from the body," &c. The body is the house; the soul, the tenant. The body, the casket; the soul, the jewel, &c.

Consider the soul,

II. *In the Dignity of its Faculties.*

As the body has its various members, so the soul has its various faculties and attributes.

1. There is the understanding.

This is the eye of the mind. The inlet of knowledge. The window of the soul.

2. There is the judgment.

Which weighs and determines respecting the things which the understanding has received.

3. There is the will.

Which chooses or rejects the things brought before it, by the understanding and judgment.

4. There are the affections.

Which cause us to love, desire, enjoy, or delight in what we choose. Or to fear, hate, &c., those things which are not agreeable to us.

5. There is the memory.

Which is the mental capacity for storing up our knowledge and ideas of things, events, &c. Then,

6. There is the conscience.

Or moral monitor of the soul, which judges and pronounces a verdict upon all we do, or say, or think. With these faculties man is exalted to a close alliance with angels, and is capable of being enriched with vast stores of mental and spiritual knowledge.

Consider the soul,

III. *In the Immortality of its Being.*

It has pleased God to make the soul an undying creature. Hence its value is greatly enhanced by the immortality of its existence. The evidences of the soul's immortality are numerous. We may just notice,

1. That its immortality seems imprinted on its nature.

Nearly all nations, and people, and tongues, have some idea of its future existence. The Chaldeans, Grecians, Pythagoreans, Egyptians, Chinese, have all believed it. It was taught by Plato, Homer, Socrates, Cicero. It is found in the writings of Brahmins, in the Alcoran of Mohammed, and in the oracles and histories of all nations. This universal impression has obviously been imprinted by the finger of God.

It seems obvious,

2. From the boundless desires of the soul.

Men not only believe it, but long for it. Thirst after it. Whether rich or poor, learned or illiterate, they shudder at the thought of destruction, and look onward to immortality.

It seems evident also,

3. From the expansion of its faculties.

The mind is capable of vast enlargement. None can place limits to its improvement. See Newton, or Boyle, or Locke, or Bacon, in childhood, with all their mental littleness; and then view them maturing in knowledge, and attaining such mental greatness. It is not reasonable that these powers are elicited, to be quenched by eternal annihilation.

We conclude the soul to be immortal,

4. From the righteous character of God.

Men are not dealt with here according to the moral features which they possess. Wicked and impious often in affluence and prosperity. The righteous are often in poverty and affliction. Often persecuted, oppressed, &c. If the righteous do not exist in a future state, then they can never be recompensed, &c. So if the wicked do not exist in a future state, they cannot possibly be punished. Hence the immortality of the soul is essential to the righteous administration of God.

5. This is clear from the statements of the Scriptures.

Jesus says, "Fear not those who can only kill the body," &c. The wicked are said to go out of life "into everlasting punishment, and the righteous into life eternal." Matt. xxv. 46. Hence all the statements about judgment, eternity, &c.

The value of the soul is obvious.

IV. *From the Manifestations of God's Infinite Regards towards it.*

1. Infinite wisdom, power, and goodness formed it.

God created it in his express image, and for his own glory.

2. The infinitely precious blood of Christ hath redeemed us.

"Redeemed not with corruptible," &c. What a price! How vast and inconceivable the sum!

3. The infinite Spirit employs its influences to save it.

He illuminates, convinces, regenerates, guides, and keeps to eternal glory.

4. Infinite glories are prepared for it.

Mansions in the imperial palace of Jehovah. Abiding thrones. Never fading honors. Inheritances incorruptible, undefiled, &c. In one word—eternal life.

APPLICATION.

1. Who can doubt the value of the soul.

2. How culpable are those who neglect their souls.

3. The powers of hell are constantly laboring for their everlasting ruin.

4. The soul is in imminent peril of being lost.

5. God alone can save and keep unto eternal life.

6. The importance of immediate repentance and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

SKETCH CXXV.

THE LOSS OF THE SOUL AND GAIN OF THE WORLD CONTRASTED

PART II.

Mark viii. 36.

In the previous sketch we have contemplated the value of the soul, in the spirituality of its nature, the dignity of its faculties, the immortality of its existence, and from the manifestation of the infinite regards of God towards it. We have now,

I. *To contemplate the Nature and Possibility of its Loss.*

Let us, then consider,

1. What is meant by its loss.

Not its annihilation, as this would be the destruction of its immortality. But,

(1) Its exclusion from all felicity.

From all the light, and peace, and rest, and glory of heaven. From the society of perfected saints, angels, and God forever.

It also includes,

(2) The infliction of the positive displeasure of God. Banishment into outer darkness. Everlasting chains. The undying worm. The terrible storm, and everlasting fire. "The wicked shall be turned into hell," &c. See an awfully graphic description, Luke xvi. 19–26.

Let us, then, inquire,

2. From whence arises the danger of the loss of the soul.

(1) The soul may be lost through *daring infidelity*. "The fool says in his heart, There is no God." Those who reject the word, the only chart, the only guide, must abide in darkness, and inevitably be lost. How many appalling scenes of dying infidels have been witnessed! Voltaire, &c.

(2) The soul may be lost through attachment to *sinful pleasures*. Revelling, wantonness, intemperance, and sensual lusts. These infatuate, corrupt, and fatten for the day of slaughter. Belshazzar, &c.

(3) The soul may be lost through *the love of the world*. The love of this world is idolatry. In opposition to spirituality of mind and love to God. Thorns which choke the seed. Awful instances in the young ruler and the rich fool.

(4) The soul may be lost through *Pharisaic pride and self-righteousness*. Creeds, professions, prayers, alms-givings, &c., are all false foundations of trust and hope. Jesus is the only basis, &c. "Except our righteousness exceed," &c. See foolish virgins. Man without a wedding-garment, &c.

(5) The soul may be lost through *careless apathy*. It is not necessary to be infidels, profane, &c., to be lost. Religion is a positive matter. A work. A warfare. A preparation for eternity. If we are careless, indolent, thoughtless, and supine, we shall assuredly perish. We must be diligent, vigilant, ready, &c. Or at last exclaim, "The harvest is past," &c.

Observe,

II. *The momentous interrogation.*

"What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world," &c.

Consider,

1. The gain supposed.

"The whole world." The thing literally is impossible.

If it were, it could not be enjoyed. Or if enjoyed, could not make the soul of man happy. But suppose a man,

(1) Be elevated to the highest earthly dignity and greatness,

(2) Be favored with immense treasures and,

(3) Have the whole round of earthly pleasures at his command. Still he would be unhappy, yea, wretched, for fears would harass him, conscience torment him, afflictions come upon him, death overtake him, and all, all would be lost in the swellings of Jordan.

Now, then, notice,

2. The profit realized.

He has had the riches of earth, but lost the treasures of heaven. He has had the pleasures of the world, but has lost the joys of eternity. He has had the honors of men, but has received the everlasting contempt of God.

Then mark,

3. The awful loss sustained.

"Lost his own soul."

Now this is,

(1) A total loss. Loss of earth and heaven. Of body and soul. Of time and the joys of eternity. The loss of every thing.

(2) This loss is irreparable. Cannot be made up. No equivalent. Seed-time gone. Summer ended. Harvest past.

(3) This loss is eternal. The lake burns forever. The smoke ascends forever. It is everlasting blackness and punishment. Deathless, undying death. Endless woe. An impassable gulf.

APPLICATION.

1. Let the soul have the first and chief care.

2. Sacrifice all that renders its salvation doubtful.

3. Think of heaven. Seek a title for it. Meetness, &c. Live for it; pray for it; hope for it, &c. Be zealous and intensely earnest for eternal life. Reply to every suggestion from men, or from the wicked one, "What shall it profit," &c.

4. Remember, "*Now is the accepted time*," &c.

5 Only one way of escape from the

wrath to come. Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, &c.

SKETCH CXXVI.

UNBELIEF

"And he marvelled because of their unbelief."—*Mark* vi. 6.

See the connection of the text with Christ's visit to his own country, &c. His teaching. The reasoning of the people. Their rejection of Christ. Then his marvelling "because of their unbelief." Unbelief is the rejection of testimony although supported by sufficient evidence. It is the closing of the eyes against the light. It is refusing the admission of truth into the mind. Some persons profess to be total unbelievers in all that respects divine revelation. Others are partially so. They admit such portions of the sacred volume as comport with their ideas and views of things. Others profess to believe the whole, but practically demonstrate that they are entire strangers to the purifying faith of the Gospel. Unbelief in any of its modes or degrees is the rejection of Christ and his Gospel.

As such, let us consider,

The Evil,—Causes,—and Effects of Unbelief.

Let us notice,

I. *The Evil of Unbelief.*

1. Unbelief undervalues all the perfections of Deity.

In redemption God has given the brightest and fullest revelation of his adorable attributes. Here is a display of his infinite skill, almighty power, inflexible justice, unspotted purity, and incomprehensible mercy. Unbelief disregards, and practically pours contempt upon the whole.

2. Unbelief insults all the persons of the Godhead.

It rejects the record and testimony of the Father, with all the overflowings of his love. It rejects the life, and sufferings, and death of the Son, the great and only sacrifice for guilt. It rejects all the wooings and influences of the Spirit, by which alone the mind can be enlightened, and the heart renewed.

3. Unbelief renders the all-important work of salvation impossible.

Faith is the first step. Without faith impossible to please God. Unbelief binds the soul in fetters; paralyzes the faculties of the mind; darkens the eye; closes the ear; hardens the heart; and renders statement, precept, promise, and threatening alike in vain.

Let us, then, consider,

II. *The Causes of Unbelief.*

1. There is the natural depravity of the heart.

First sin was one of unbelief. This is one of the native diseases of the heart See Heb. iii. 12. "Take heed," &c.

Then,

2. There is ignorance, or blindness of mind.

Hence the murderers of Christ, who rejected him to the last, "knew not what they did." So Saul of Tarsus, &c. "He did it ignorantly through unbelief." Darkness is the element of unbelief.

3. There is love of sin.

The Gospel testimony demands the sacrifice of every idol for Christ. All must be forsaken for the cross. Men therefore dislike this, and love their sins, and willingly remain in unbelief.

4. There is Satanic influence.

Spirit of God disposes to faith; the spirit of the wicked one to unbelief. See 2 Cor iv. 14.

5. There is the pride of human nature.

Faith humbles the soul; prostrates the high imaginations of the heart, &c.; produces conviction, contrition, and confession of soul. Men naturally love to exalt themselves, and therefore proudly reject the message of the cross.

Let us, then, advert,

III. *To the effects of unbelief.*

1. It keeps us in a state of condemnation before God.

"He that believeth not is condemned already, and the wrath of God abideth on him."

2. It renders useless all the provisions of the Gospel.

Refuses the feast. Rejects the water of life. Looks not at the cross. Applies not to the physician, &c. Flees not to the refuge, &c.

3. It is a sin for which there can be no remedy.

For it utterly rejects the divine remedy, and spurns the only means of salvation.

4. It is a sin peculiar to those favored with the light of the gospel.

Pagans cannot properly be chargeable with it; and devils believe and tremble.

5. A sin which, if not abandoned, must consign to eternal remediless perdition.

"He that believeth not shall be damned," &c.

APPLICATION.

1. Learn your responsibility. God calls upon you to believe. You have all that is necessary to enable you to exercise faith; faculties, Gospel, &c. "Faith cometh by hearing," &c.

2. However feeble faith is, if exercised it shall be increased.

3. Let it be exercised now, "For behold, now," &c. "The word is nigh thee," &c. Rom. x. 8–17.

SKETCH CXXVII.

THE PRECIOUSNESS OF THE DIVINE WORD.

"The law of thy mouth is better unto me than thousands of gold and silver."—*Psalm* cxix. 72.

In this interesting passage we have presented,

I. *The true Nature of the Word of God.*

"The law of thy mouth."

Observe, then,

1. Its authority.

It is a "*law.*" As such it is a rule of conduct; solemnly obligatory; and supported by rewards and punishments.

2. Its divinity.

The law of God's "*mouth.*" Not of human but of divine origin. The revelation of God's mind to man. 2 Tim. iii. 16. 2 Pet. i. 21. It possesses striking evidences of divinity.

Its great and sublime doctrines.

Its antiquity and preservation.

Its renovating influence, sanctifying power, &c. John xvii. 17. See Psalm xix. 7–9.

Consider,

II. *Its inestimable Worth.*

"Better to me than thousands of gold and silver."

1. In many things it resembles gold and silver.

(1) On account of its preciousness. Gold and silver most precious of metals. Word of God intrinsically so. Psalm cxxxviii. 2.

(2) In gold and silver there is much value in small compass. So the word of God. Of more worth than all the books in the universe. Every word precious &c. Several of its paragraphs of incalculable worth. See, as examples, Exod xxxiv. 6, &c. Luke ii. 13–21. 1 Tim iv. 8.

(3) For their purity. Every word of God is pure. The standard of purity Prov. xxx. 5.

(4) For their splendor.

Brightest of metals. So the word of God is luminous, resplendent, &c. As a light shining, &c.

(5) For their solidity and weight. Heaviest of metals. Hebrew word for gold, signifies to consolidate, &c. Word of God is solid, weighty; nothing trivial or light.

(6) For their inconsumable essence. Fire does not destroy, &c. It purifies, and removes only the dross. Word of God will stand every test. It has been tried for centuries, both by good and bad men; yet every word, and jot, and tittle, remains the same. It abideth forever.

(7) For their usefulness. Gold and silver have ever been a medium of trade, &c. So of God's word it is said, "The merchandise of it," &c. Gold and silver have been applied to ornament the person The word of God is the true ornament of the soul. Prov. iv. 9, &c. Of gold the vessels of the sanctuary were made, &c So it is the truth which sanctifies us to the service of God, makes us holy vessels in his house.

But the law of God's mouth,

2. Is better than gold and silver.

(1) Better in itself. Gold mere inanimate, senseless matter. The law of God's mouth; the production of the divine mind; the transcript of the divine likeness. Heavenly and spiritual in its nature.

(2) Better in its object and design. Destined for the soul. The food of the mind, &c.

(3) Better in its effects. Gold and silver confer earthly advantages. The word of God, spiritual and eternal advantages.

(4) Better in point of essentiality. Gold and silver are dispensable; not truly essential. Word of God indispensable, and all-essential.

(5) Better in point of certainty. Gold

and silver uncertain. "Make wings," &c. Word of God sure. Thieves cannot rob us.

(6) Better in point of durability. Gold and silver are corruptible; the word of God as incorruptible as the great Original from whence it proceeded.

APPLICATION.

1. Bless God for his precious word. Next to Jesus and the Holy Spirit, his greatest gift to man.

2. Prize and revere it. Set your hearts upon it.

3. Seek to be greatly enriched with it. Covet much of it, &c. Lay it up. Dig for it.

4. Use it. Apply it to your diversity of condition. It is profitable for all seasons and circumstances.

5. What shall be the end of those who neglect the Gospel of Christ?

SKETCH CXXVIII.

THE BELIEVER'S ENTIRE DEPENDENCE ON CHRIST.

"Without me ye can do nothing."—*John* xv. 5.

THE Redeemer had just been discoursing on the close and vital union subsisting between himself and his people. He had illustrated this by the beautiful figure of the vine and the branches. And thus he showed in the application of the subject, that as the branch would wither, and be utterly worthless, separated from the vine, so in like manner "without him his disciples could do nothing."

The believer depends entirely upon Christ.

Let us

Illustrate—and apply this Truth.

I. *Illustrate the proposition contained in the Text.*

"Without Christ we can do nothing."

Without Christ,

1. We cannot obtain saving knowledge.

Men may be mentally great; philosophical, learned, &c. But spiritual knowledge is only to be derived from Jesus. "He is the light of the world." He is the "morning star," and "Sun of righteousness." He must arise upon the mind, &c. Luke i. 78.

Without Christ,

2. Faith in the Gospel is impossible.

He is the object and author of faith. Philip. i. 18. He must be placed before us crucified, &c. Faith is laying hold of him; running unto him; looking to him &c.; receiving him, &c.

Without Christ,

3. Conversion cannot be effected.

The power of Christ alone can turn men from darkness, &c. Christ must open the eyes; unstop the ears; subdue the heart; renew the mind. He it is that "creates all things new"

Without Christ,

4. Holiness is unattainable.

The word and Spirit of Christ, and the application of his precious blood, cleanse from all sin. He is our sanctification. In him we are "new creatures;" partakers of the divine nature. Rom. viii. 1, 2, also viii. 9, 10.

Without Christ,

5. Obedience is impracticable.

There may be decency, external rectitude, &c.; but we only bear the fruits of righteousness as we are in him, the living vine. His love must constrain; his grace give ability, &c.

Without Christ,

6. Solid comfort and peace cannot be realized.

A thousand voices may address us, but he only can give peace. He affords rest, to the weary; consolation, to the wretched; and joy, to the distressed. Believing in him, "we rejoice with joy," &c.

Without Christ.

7. We cannot maintain steadfastness, or triumph over enemies.

We abide by remaining united to him "We are more than conquerors through him." "We can do all things through Christ," &c. "Thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory," &c.

Without Christ,

8. We cannot die peacefully, safe, and happy.

He must take away the dread of death; he must illumine the dreary valley; his rod and staff must comfort, &c. To die in Christ is blessedness, yea, eternal gain.

Let us, then,

II. *Apply this subject.*

It is a proper subject,

1. For examination.

Are we in Christ; really, vitally? Do we depend and rely solely on him?

2. For direction.

Cleave to Christ. Abide in him. Live near to him.

3. For consolation.

In Christ is our all-sufficiency. With him we possess all things. Rom. viii. 32.

SKETCH CXXIX.

THE ROYAL APPEARANCE OF GOD'S CHILDREN.

"Each one resembled the children of a king."—*Judges* viii. 18.

We design to employ the text in an accommodated sense, and to show in what respects the people of God resemble the children of a king.

They do so,

I. *In their spiritual Conformity to the Image of King Jesus.*

Wicked men resemble the prince of darkness; they are manifestly of their father, the devil. In regeneration the image of God is imparted; the mind of Christ is received; and they bear the image of the second Adam, the Lord from heaven. "Beholding as in a glass," &c. 2 Cor. iii. 18.

They resemble the children of a king,

II. *In their illustrious Titles.*

They are the children of God; sons of the Most High; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ. A royal priesthood. Kings and priests unto God, &c.

III. *In their courtly Apparel.*

They wear the royal costume; "the best robe." "The garments of holiness." See Rev. iii. 18. They have all the costly apparel of righteousness and salvation.

IV. *In their royal Immunities and Privileges.*

1. They dwell in the royal presence.

They live with God; dwell with God, and God dwells with them. Rev. iii. 20. "My father will come unto you," &c. John xiv. 26.

2. They have constant access to God.

Strangers find access to royalty difficult, &c. Can only be obtained as a special favor, and at special times. Believers have constant access to God. Way ever open. Audience never refused.

3. They have royal provision.

Fed by the king's bounty; sit at his table, feast in his banqueting-house, &c. Satisfied with the provision of his house &c.

4. They have special instruction.

Have a royal education. It is theirs to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven. Possess the knowledge of the true God. Have an unction from the Holy One, and are taught all things. They are instructed by the word, gospel, Spirit, &c

5. They have a kingly guard.

The angels are ministering spirits. Heb i. 14. They bear them up, &c. Encamp around them, and conduct them to glory God is also their defence; their rock and shield.

6. They have royal prospects.

There is pledged unto them a kingdom inheritance, a throne, a crown; fulness of joy, &c.; pleasures for evermore. It is said, they shall sit and reign, and rule, and have dominion forever and ever.

APPLICATION.

Learn,

1. The dignity and rights of the saints of God.

2. How full of consolation to believers in sorrow and affliction!

3. Urge the attainment of the character, that the privileges may be possessed. By faith in the Lord Jesus, we become the sons of God, &c. John i. 12.

SKETCH CXXX

THE IMPORTANT PURCHASE.

"Buy the truth."—*Prov.* xxiii. 23

Truth is one of the essential perfections of Deity. It is the girdle which binds all the graces and virtues of godliness together. It is the crown of human excellency. The Scriptures are the records of truth; Jesus is the Prince of truth; and the gladsome sound of the Gospel is pre-eminently the truth as it is in Jesus. A state of sin is a state of error; a state of grace, is a state of truth. In the text we are directed to "buy the truth."

Let us consider,

I. *The Commodity recommended*

"The truth."

1. There is doctrinal truth.

The truth concerning our own state helplessness, misery, &c. The truth con

cerning God's love to us; concerning Christ's person, sufferings, work, offices, &c. Truth concerning the way of access to God; the way of salvation by faith.

2. There is experimental truth.

The truth in its influence on the mind. The truth liberating and sanctifying the heart, &c. The truth dwelling within us, producing all the joys and fruits of righteousness to the glory of God.

Then,

3. There is practical truth.

Truth exhibited in the life and character. Truth embodied in sincerity of heart, in opposition to guile and hypocrisy; singleness of eye; purity of motive; uprightness of life; truth in conversation; speaking the truth in love.

Notice,

II. *The Counsel given.*

"Buy the truth."

Now to obtain the truth we must,

1. Come to the mart of truth.

It is not to be had in the world; but by receiving the Gospel, the great depository of truth. By obeying the Prince of truth; and uniting ourselves to the church, which is the pillar and ground of truth.

2. We must sacrifice the hinderances to truth.

Among them are self-estimation, worldly pleasures, wicked associates, unbelief, heart of sin, &c.

3. We must employ the means truth recommends.

There are two, the offering up of prayer, "If any man lack wisdom," &c. And a cordial belief of the truth, in which we surrender our hearts entirely to Christ.

III. *Let this Purchase be urged by several Considerations.*

We urge the purchase of the truth,

1. From your absolute need of it.

You cannot be really wise, nor happy, nor useful, nor saved without it. You must possess the truth, or perish forever.

2. From the free and easy mode of its acquisition.

It may be had without learning, great talents, or enlarged capacities. Riches, profound research, or laborious study are not necessary. "Ho, every one that thirsteth," &c. "Ask, and receive," &c.

3. From its essential worth.

Gold and gems are but dross to it. It is the health of the soul—the dignity of man—the prerequisite to life eternal.

APPLICATION.

Urge it upon all classes.

Upon the young. See Prov. iv. 5. Heads of families; and the aged. Upon the rich and poor. Upon the moral and profane, &c. The advantages of this purchase will be real—spiritual—abiding—and eternal.

SKETCH CXXXI.

THE PROHIBITED SALE.

"Sell it not."—*Prov.* xxiii. 23

THE truth must be purchased, however much we may be called to give for it. Better have the truth than life, or the whole world itself. When possessed it must be retained. Held fast. However tempted to barter it away, whatever price is offered, the Divine prohibition is, "Sell it not."

Let us inquire,

I. *By whom the Truth is sold.*

This prohibition is violated,

1. By the mercenary minister.

Those who enter upon the office for a morsel of bread; those who consult their gain more than the interests of godliness; those who suppress any portion of the truth and declare smooth things to please men. See Micah iii. 11; Tit. i. 11; Jude 11

The truth is sold,

2. By the temporizing professor.

There are exactions and self-denials required in following Christ. The world must be forsaken in its spirit, maxims, &c.; the cross borne, &c. How often are these things evaded, religion compromised, and the truth sold.

The truth is sold,

3. By the false speaker.

There is not a more degrading habit of mind than that which produces deceit and falsehood. It strikes at the root of all moral excellency; is the very portrait of the wicked one. All liars have their portion in the lake, &c.

The truth is sold,

4. By the flatterer.

Here we must discriminate between commendation and flattery. Jesus publicly commended the affection of the woman who had been a sinner; but flattery is the expression of praise beyond what is deserved. It is imposition on the credulity

and weakness of our fellow men. It is a course where the heart and mouth are at variance, &c.

The truth is sold,

5. By the backslider.

Hence James speaks of those who "err from the truth." It is clearly exhibited in Peter, who denied that he knew Jesus. It is renouncing the truth, making shipwreck of it, &c.

Let us then,

II. *Assign some Reasons why we should not sell the Truth.*

1. Because we cannot receive an equivalent.

If we sell the bargain is bad. Were the globe one mass of gold or rubies, yet it is valueless contrasted with the truth. Life itself is not an equivalent for the truth.

We should not sell the truth,

2. Because it has no substitute.

Truth is the atmosphere of the mind; we cannot live without it, and there is nothing that can supply its place.

3. Because its sale is ever accompanied with the most appalling circumstances.

See this in our first parents, Balaam, Gehazi, Judas, Ananias, and Sapphira. With the dismissal of truth, peace, comfort, and hope, all go with it.

4. Because it is indispensable to salvation.

Salvation consists in knowing the truth, walking in the truth, being the children of the truth. If we do not hold the truth, then God will not smile—Jesus accept—nor can we possibly enter into the celestial city. The basis of God's eternal throne is truth.

APPLICATION.

1. See that you are really the children of the truth, and walk in it, and hold it fast.

2. Be enriched with the word of truth.

3. Copy the example of the Prince of truth.

4. Pray fervently for the Spirit of truth.

SKETCH CXXXII.

SAMUEL'S ADDRESS TO ISRAEL.

"Only fear the Lord, and serve him in truth with all your heart, for consider how great things he hath done for you."—1 *Sam.* xii. 24.

THE occasion of the text. The people desired a king. God allowed them to have their request. Signs of his displeasure The people, alarmed, confess their sin ver. 19. Samuel advises them, &c.

Notice

I. *The Duties urged.*

"Fear the Lord, and serve him, &c.

He urges them,

1. To fear the Lord.

This is an indispensable part of true godliness. The beginning of wisdom, &c. It is not slavish dread, nor superstitious terror, but a holy filial fear of offending God. Walking and acting as always in his sight. Setting him ever before us. Job xxviii. 28; Psalm xix. 9; Prov. xxiii. 17; Rev. xiv. 7.

We are urged,

2. To serve God.

In the way that he appoints. With the voluntary devotedness of the heart and life. With constancy and perseverance. This service must be both public and private and have respect to all his commandments.

3. It must be in truth with all our hearts

In truth. From pure motive. With sincerity, &c. With all our hearts. The heart must be given to him; the heart supply the streams of our fear and service. "All" our hearts. Every faculty and power engaged. Hearts undivided, &c. With the understanding, judgment, will, affections, conscience, &c.

Notice,

II. *The powerful Motive supplied.*

"For consider what great things the Lord hath done for you."

This is seen,

1. In the temporal provisions of his bounty.

"Daily loaded us with benefits," &c. Food, raiment habitations; mercies new every morning, &c.

2. In providential interpositions.

How often snatched us from danger; raised us from sickness; brought us back from the gates of death. In the midst of dangers and deaths preserved until this day

3. In the exercises of his mercy.

Called us from darkness, &c.; illuminated our minds; convinced of sin; blessed us with pardon and regeneration; raised us to heirship with Jesus.

4. In the supplies of his grace.

How often intrusted us; comforted us strengthened supported, and preserved our

souls. He has never withheld any good thing. All has been ours, &c. "All things worked," &c.

5. In the promises of glory.

He has not only done much for the past, but he has engaged to do much for the future. He has prepared, for all who love him, a kingdom, a crown, a throne—eternal glory. And he has engaged to preserve and keep until these things be all possessed. "Kept by the power," &c. "I give unto my sheep," &c.

APPLICATION.

Learn,

1. The practical nature of true religion. It includes both the fear and service of God.

2. How great are our obligations thus to fear and serve God.

3. Abused mercies will bring a fearful weight of judgment upon us.

SKETCH CXXXIII.

SAINTS AND ANGELS.

"Equal unto the angels"—*Luke* xx. 36.

Now are believers the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what they shall be. The present is but the dawn of their being, the morning of their day, the commencement of their dignity. The grandeur of their future condition is but faintly revealed even in the oracles of life. One thing is certain, that their future state will vastly exceed their utmost desires, or their most lively conceptions. Jesus had been referring to the resurrection; and he assures us, the saints will then be "equal unto the angels."

I. *Men were originally inferior to Angels.*

1. Angels had priority of existence.

They were witnesses of our world's formation; they saw the astounding process, "and they sang together and shouted for joy." Job xxxviii. 4.

2. They had a more exalted habitation.

Man was created for the earth; destined to live and reign upon it. Angels dwell in the lofty habitation of the Most High; the imperial palace of God; in his immediate presence; in the blaze of his refulgent glories.

3. They had a superior nature.

It is probable they are pure spirits, endowed with astonishing powers. Highly intellectual. Beings of perfect beauty and loveliness, and amazing strength. "Man was made a little lower than the angels;" the next link in the scale of existences

II. *Through exalting Grace Saints shall be equal to Angels.*

1. They shall be equal in knowledge.

Faculties as exalted, equal facilities, &c.

2. Equal in purity.

For they shall be clothed in snowy white; without spot, &c. Bearing the full impress of the mind of Christ.

3. Equal in felicity.

Every cause of sorrow annihilated: every stream of bliss overflowing. "Fulness of joy, and pleasures for evermore."

4. Equal in dignity.

Dwell as near the same throne; engage in the same services; join in the same worship, &c

5. Equal in immortality.

Flourish as the angels in blooming and immortal youth. One boundless state of glorious existence.

III. *In some Respects when glorified, Saints will have a pre-eminence over Angels.*

1. It is probable that their raptures will be sweeter.

They will have the joys of deliverance from eternal wo; will look back on the misery they merited, and the mercy they have received.

2. Their relationship to God will be closer.

Not merely creatures, but sons. God will appear in their nature; and they will appear as partakers of the divine nature. A relationship transcendently more intimate and glorious than that of angels.

3. Their honors will be greater.

Sit with Christ on his throne, "judge the world," &c. "Judge angels," &c. 1 Cor. vi. 2, 3.

4. Their songs will be louder.

Angels will sing the honors of divine holiness and goodness,

> "Worthy the Lamb that died, they cry,
> To be exalted thus."

But here they must stop, the saints only can finish the ascription,

> "Worthy the Lamb, our hearts reply,
> For he was *slain* for *us*."

APPLICATION.

1 What a stimulus to holy ambition Let us be aspirants for holy attainments

hat we may have exalted stations before the throne of the Lamb.

2. Let us imitate the angels, in their pursuit of knowledge, love of purity, works of benevolence, and constant obedience.

3. Let the subject draw our minds towards heaven, &c. O, how desirable to see Jesus; to dwell with Jesus, and sing his praises forever. To sing, from saving experience, for,

"There's not an angel's tongue can tell,
The wonders of his love."

SKETCH CXXXIV

THE RANSOM FOUND

"Then he is gracious unto him, and saith, Deliver him from going down to the pit, I have found a ransom."—*Job* xxxiii. 24.

THE subject of redemption is of all others the most important to man. In comparison with this all others are trivial or worthless. This is what his state requires. This is necessary to his present peace, and to his hope of future blessedness. In our text we have an epitome of it—the Gospel in miniature.

Let us contemplate,

I. *Man's perilous State.*

II. *God's gracious Regards.*

And,

III. *The Means of Deliverance provided*

I. *Man's perilous State.*

He was "going down to the pit."

This strikingly represents,

1. Man in his fallen and debased condition.

Crown fallen from his head; fallen from holiness, dignity, dominion, happiness, &c., into guilt, depravity, and misery. "Horrible pit, miry clay," &c Ps. xl. 1, 2.

2. It denotes man's passage to the grave.

Sin introduced disease and death. Hence the earth opened its mouth to receive our corrupted dying bodies.

3. It represents our exposedness to the pit of destruction.

Described as a bottomless pit, Rev. ix. 2; and xx. 3. Now the tendency of the sinner was towards perdition. His sin had doomed him to it. And sin also was ripening him for it. His steps were downwards towards the gates of perdition, the regions of endless wo. What a dreadful state! What a fearful condition! Tophet opening her doors to receive him. But mark, then it was that God compassioned him, and

II. *Displayed his gracious Regards towards him.*

Now God's interposition on his behalf must have been altogether gracious.

For,

1. Deity was entirely independent of man

He could easily have blotted out the human race, and have formed creatures every way more worthy of his regards. His glory and happiness could not require him to provide for his recovery.

2. Man had nothing to interest Jehovah in his welfare.

No moral excellency; no reasonable apologies for his crime; no possibility of giving a return.

3. Jehovah had every reason to punish.

Justice was injured, holiness insulted goodness abused, &c., yet mercy prevailed, "God so loved," &c. His grace was so abundant, his compassions so overflowing, that he said, "Deliver him from going down to the pit," &c.

This leads us,

III. *To the Means of Deliverance provided.*

"I have found a ransom."

Here observe,

1. The source of our deliverance.

"I" have found, &c. Man did not find nor yet angels, but God found a ransom. O yes! God alone possessed stores of wisdom sufficient for the great and mighty undertaking.

Notice,

2. The instrument of our deliverance,

Was a ransom. That ransom was his own Son—"He gave his Son," "Spared not his own Son," &c. The price of our ransom was "the precious blood of Christ."

Notice,

3. The mode of our ransom.

This was done by assuming our nature, obeying the law; dying for sin; overcoming the powers of hell rising from the grave, &c. See Isa. liii. 4–11; Rom. iv 15; Col. i. 20.

APPLICATION.

Learn,

1. What ruin and misery sin has produced.

2. What divine mercy has provided. And

3. What the Saviour's merits have procured.

4. The necessity of feeling ourselves personally interested in the blessings of redeeming grace. To this a believing, cordial reception of the ransom is necessary—"He that hath the Son, hath life."

5. The grateful return we should render for the loving-kindness and redeeming mercy of God.

SKETCH CXXXV.

CREATION OF MAN.

"So God created man in his own image."—*Gen.* i 27.

One important branch of human study should be man. We ought not to be ignorant of our species—of ourselves. Our text refers to the creation of the first of our race, "So God created man in his own image."

Let us consider,

I. *Some general Circumstances connected w'h the Creation of Man.*

There is something striking,

1. In the manner of his Creation.

With respect to other departments of God's works, there was the simple expression of the Divine will: as, "Let there be light," "Let the waters bring forth," &c. But a sort of council seems convened, when man is to be formed, and we hear the language of the Divine plurality of distinctions in the Godhead, saying, "Let *us* make man," &c.

Observe also,

2. The period of his creation.

He was the last, as well as the fairest of the Divine works. His residence, and all other things necessary for his comfort, was prepared for his reception. Then, when the earth had been fashioned in all its beauty, and Eden enriched with all her stores of enjoyment, "God made man," the climax of creating wisdom, power, and love.

Notice,

3. The exalted scale in the rank of beings in which he was placed.

Made vastly superior to the animal creation; yet uniting all their excellencies in himself, and being thus allied to them. Made, as to his soul, of kindred nature with the angels, and put a little lower in dignity and glory. In fact, man was formed as the mid-link between the animated creatures of earth, and the celestial hosts of heaven. A material, immaterial, earth-born, yet spiritual creature.

Observe,

4. The perfect happiness he possessed.

Arising from the sinless, undisturbed harmony of his faculties; the abundance of his enjoyments, intercourse with angels the favor and smiles of God, &c.

Let us notice,

II. *The express Image in which Man was created.*

So God created man in "his own image."

1. In the image of his spirituality.

"God breathed in man," &c. Soul formed after the spiritual likeness of God. "There is a spirit in man, and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth him understanding." Job xxxii. 8.

2. In the image of his perfections.

Hence his understanding, judgment, will, affections, all seem to resemble and reflect the glorious attributes of Deity.

3. In the image of his holiness.

"God made man upright." He made him holy, just, and good. See Eph. iv. 24. Without spot, or frailty, or imperfection.

4. In the image of his dominion.

God is the supreme Ruler over all worlds; and he made man lord of the lower creation; "gave him dominion," &c. Gen. i. 28.

5. In the image of his immortality.

God made man a "*living* soul." Gen. ii. 7. Destined him for an endless duration of being. There can be no doubt that man, had he remained holy, would either have dwelt forever on earth, or, after filling up a period of probation, have been removed to the heavenly state. God designed that the soul of man should never die.

APPLICATION.

1. Let us remember with gratitude to God the dignity he conferred upon us in creation. "What is man," &c. Psal viii. 4.

2. Let us shed tears of sorrow over the fallen ruined state of man. Alas! how is human nature fallen—degraded!

3. Man is still a precious creature, amid all the ruin sin has produced.

4. In redemption, we are exalted to dignity, happiness, and salvation.

5. Let us seek the restoration of the divine image on our souls; for without this, without holiness, no man can see the Lord

SKETCH CXXXVI.

THE FALL.

"She took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also to her husband with her, and he did eat." —*Gen.* iii. 6.

It is not to be supposed that a good and perfect Being would be the maker of unholy and wicked creatures. That this *is* the true character of human nature, universal experience and observation attest. From whence, then, has man derived the evils of his nature? This revelation alone can answer. The text refers to human apostacy; it leads us to the fountain-head of man's depravity. God had created man upright, but he had given to him a law; that law he violated, and thus sin entered into our world, with all our wo.

Let us notice,

The Test of Obedience which God instituted.

The Manner of its Violation.

The moral Evil it involved.

And, The calamitous Results it produced.

Notice, then,

I. *The Test of Obedience which God instituted.*

This was the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. The fruit of this tree was prohibited on penalty of death. Many have cavilled at the test; this is much easier than to provide one more suited for the original state of our first parents.

This test was,

1. Just and reasonable.

The appointment of divine wisdom and goodness. God had a right to legislate, and it was for man's welfare and happiness to obey. It was,

2. Simple and plain.

Nothing dark or ambiguous; nothing deep and profound. They could not mistake it. Error impossible.

3. It was practicable and easy.

They had no need of this fruit. Their happiness perfect without it. God gave them all the rest; he only reserved this one as the test of allegiance. They had perfect ability, and every reason to be obedient.

Consider,

II. *The Manner of its Violation.*

1. The serpent tempted.

That is, Satan used the organs of the serpent, and thus deceived our first parents In this he displayed great *subtlety*, especially in tempting Eve when alone; in doing it by insinuation, and then by direct falsehood. He also displayed great wickedness and daring; contradicts God's testimony, and assures her she shall not die. Reflects upon God for appointing the test &c. Gen. iii. 1–6.

2. The woman transgressed.

The gradations in her fall were these: she was found *near* the tree; she *gazed* upon its fruit; she *listened* to the tempter she *desired;* she *took*, and *ate*.

And, then,

3. She gave also to Adam, and he did eat.

It appears that Adam hesitated not, but at once became a joint participator of her guilt. In reference to the crime of both of them, it is clear that they sinned *freely*. They were only tempted, not compelled. It is probable that they sinned *immediately*. Supposed by many, that they fell the first day. "Man being in honor, abideth not" Ps. xlix. 12. Notice,

III. *The moral Evil it involved.*

In the first sin there was a display,

1. Of great credulity, yet great unbelief.

They credited Satan, and disbelieved God. Had they kept God's word, apostacy would have been avoided. Unbelief the first sin.

It was a display,

2. Of great discontent.

Never were creatures more abundantly supplied. The earth, with all its fulness, was their possession; Eden, with its treasures, their habitation. Yet they were not content, &c.

It displayed,

3. Great pride.

They possessed the highest place on earth. Dignity above that of all the creatures. Yet they would be "as gods," &c

4. Great disobedience and presumption

It was an act of open transgression; of direct daring and presumption. They ran the risk of the fearful threatening being executed. It also evinced,

5. Great ingratitude.

What a return for the honors and favors God had conferred upon them. Rebellion against the Father of their being. Treason against their rightful, gracious King.

Consider,

IV. *The calamitous Results it produced.*

1. Overwhelming fear and shame.

Before all was peaceful and serene. Now fear seized them as an armed man. All perturbation and tremor. Endeavored to flee from the face of God. Covered with shame, ver. 7, &c.

2. Open exposure and conviction.

Their guilt is manifest; their own lips declare it. Self-convicted, &c. iii. 9–13.

3. The divine displeasure and punishment.

(1) On the serpent. See ver. 15.

(2) On the woman; subjection and sorrow in child-bearing, ver. 16.

(3) On Adam. Ground cursed; toil, &c. xvii. 18, 19. On both death, though not immediately executed. They were expelled from Eden, and became the victims of sorrow, distress, disease, and mortality. Yet God in the midst of wrath remembered mercy. He pitied them in their low estate, and provided a Saviour for them. See ver. 15.

APPLICATION.

1. Learn the origin of human sin.
2. Its disastrous effects.
3. Our natural connection with it.

And, 4. The only way of deliverance from it. By faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was manifested in the flesh, to destroy the work of the devil. See Rom. v. 12–17.

SKETCH CXXXVII.

FOLLY OF SELF-CONFIDENCE.

"He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool."—*Prov.* xxviii. 26.

THE object of our trust and confidence must necessarily be of the greatest importance. It is the foundation of the building, which, if not strong and secure, must involve the edifice in ruin. It is the ground into which the anchor of the mariner is cast, and on which the safety of the vessel depends. Being so confessedly important, we meet with a variety of directions concerning it in the divine word. We are warned repeatedly against false objects of trust; we are especially admonished not to trust in man, whose breath is in his nostrils; not even in princes, for men of high degree, as well as men of low degree, are vanity. We are cautioned not to trust in riches—not to make gold our confidence. In the text we are cautioned not to trust in our own hearts, "For he that trusteth," &c.

Notice,

I. *The Evil the Text refers to.*

"Trusting in our own hearts." The heart obviously signifies here the whole soul. Trusting in it, means to rest on its sufficiency; to depend upon it in the various circumstances in which we may be placed.

It clearly includes,

1. A reliance upon our own wisdom in the concerns of life.

Wisdom would evidently dictate, that in the common affairs of life, we should avail ourselves of the *advice* and *experience* of *others*. "In the multitude of counsel there is safety." "He that hearkeneth to counsel shall be wise." Age, and talent, and experience enable us to be useful to others. Then we should especially seek *counsel of the Lord*. "In all thy ways acknowledge him." "I have set the Lord always before me." See Psalm xxxvii. 1–7. It is obvious no man is sufficient for his own guidance in the common affairs of life, seeing we cannot tell what a day may bring forth.

To trust in our own hearts is,

2. To adopt our own schemes of religion.

(1) The devotee of natural religion does this, who affirms that the works of nature and his own reason are sufficient for his guidance through time into eternity.

(2) The rejector of divine mysteries does this, who will admit nothing into his creed but what his imperfect mind can understand.

(3) The enthusiast does this, who places all his hope on excited feelings and warm emotions.

(4) All they do this who add to, or diminish from Christ's holy doctrines, ordinances, or commands.

To trust in our own hearts is,

3. To confide in the moral goodness of our own hearts.

Some claim native goodness of heart; are quite ignorant of the plague of their hearts; have no sense of evil; no sins to confess. Others are comparatively good; more externally decent, more just, more benevolent, than those around them. Are not those also in danger of thus sinning, who boast of spiritual attainments, which can only be experienced by sinless beings in the heavenly state?

The Christian also trusts in his own heart when,

4. He relies upon his own skill or power in temptation and trouble.

We are not sufficient for ourselves, when all is clear and prosperous. Never are we safe but when God holds us up. How much less in the night of sorrow, in storms, conflicts, &c. "Without Christ we can do nothing."

Notice,

II. *The Declaration made concerning this Evil.*

"He that trusteth in his own heart *is a fool.*"

This is obvious,

1. If we appeal to reason.

How is it possible that man can find in himself resources for all his exigencies and wants? In temporal things men are all linked together, and all upheld by God. This is still more necessary in spiritual concerns. Reason says, every man requires light, and aid, and comfort; and no man is sufficient for these things; "therefore he that trusteth," &c.

Let us appeal,

2. To the heart itself.

Our hearts are unsound, diseased, darkened, exceedingly weak, prone to evil. Yea, deceitful above all things, &c. "He that trusteth," &c.

Let us appeal,

3. To examples.

And we will not select those cases of notorious wickedness left on the pages of revelation, but we will take the best and worthiest; we will take of the pious, not the profane. It deceived Noah; it deceived Abraham; it deceived Jacob; it deceived Solomon; it deceived Moses; it deceived David; it deceived Peter; yea, it deceived all the disciples, for they all forsook Jesus, and fled.

Let us appeal,

4. To our own experience.

Have we not all tried the experiment? And have we not always reaped disappointment? Have we not always found our own knowledge to be mere ignorance; our own resolutions, vanity; our courage, fear; our own strength, weakness; our best righteousness, as filthy rags; and that in us that is, in our flesh, dwelleth no good thing?

We appeal,

5. To the Word of God.

For to trust in our own hearts is *self conceit;* and it is written, "Be not wise in your own conceits." Rom. xii. 16. To trust in our own hearts, is the essence of *pride* and *self-exaltation;* and it is written, "Be not high-minded, but fear." Rom. xi. 20. "He that exalteth himself, shall be abased." Luke xiv. 11. "Every one proud in heart, is an abomination to the Lord." Prov. xvi. 5. To trust in our own hearts is *self-righteous idolatry*, the worst and silliest of all idolatry; and as such, it involves a rejection of God, as the object of our supreme love and worship. It is *direct* disobedience and *unbelief;* for we are commanded to trust only in God—to believe only in Christ. Every other refuge will fail—every other foundation be swept away.

APPLICATION.

1. Let the subject be impressed upon each and all, so as to lead to devout and prayerful examination.

2. Let us avoid self-complacency, as the direct road to endless ruin. If we lift ourselves up, we shall assuredly fall into the condemnation of the devil. Salvation incompatible with self-trust.

3. Let us daily seek the humbling grace of God. Then shall we sit at his feet and say, Not unto us, O Lord, but to thy exalted name be all honor and praise, &c

SKETCH CXXXVIII.

THE LOVE OF CHRIST TO RUINED MAN.

"For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: and that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again."—*2 Cor* v. 14, 15.

THE subject this evening is an epitome of the Gospel. It is a sort of brief analysis

of the scheme of redemption. It is a declaration of man's ruin, and of God's gracious regards to him. It is a statement of the great doctrine of the atonement, and the influence it should produce upon us. It shows us how the apostle Paul, and his fellow apostles, felt on this subject. They had been charged with the madness of enthusiasm. This is their defence, "Whether we be beside ourselves," &c., ver. 13. "For the love of Christ constraineth us," &c.

We have,

I. *An Affecting Description of Mankind.*

"All dead."

Now this is a very common account of our fallen state. Hence the apostle says, "You hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins." Ephesians ii. 1. "Awake, thou that sleepest," &c.

1. There is spiritual death.

No life of God in the soul. Power prostrated. Signs of existence wanting. Heart cold. No pulse of praise No breath of prayer. No activity of the spiritual faculties.

Then,

2. There is judicial death.

Dead by law. Capital crime committed, and the extreme sentence of the law incurred. State of sin is one of condemnation. "Condemned already."

Then,

3. There is exposedness to eternal death.

"The soul that sinneth shall die." "The wages of sin is death." Now this death is the infliction of everlasting banishment from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power. 2 Thess. i. 9.

Then there is,

4. The universality of this state.

"Then were all dead." Now this word all," must include the whole world. Yes; this declaration relates to every child of man. "The whole world," says John, 'lieth in wickedness." "God hath concluded all men in unbelief." Paul says, 'Death has passed upon all men, for all have sinned."

Notice,

II. *The amazing Exhibition of the Love of Christ.*

"He died for them, and rose again." Yes; every event in Christ's history was for the benefit of this fallen world. He was born for us, for the angels said, "Unto you is born," &c. "We bring glad tidings of great joy to all people," &c. He lived for us, and obeyed the law for us; and thus left us an "example that we should follow his steps." But his life and work were only preparatory steps to that great end for which God sent him into our world, and for which he gave himself to be the Saviour of our race. He came especially to die. To die for us—to die for all.

His love was seen in that,

1. He died.

His death was emphatically an event always kept in view in divine redemption. The sacrifices all shadowed him forth as dying. The prophets foretold his dying. He himself told his disciples that he must die. He evidently had his own mind ever fixed upon this event. When he was transfigured, and conversed with Moses and Elias, it was respecting "*his decease*," &c. Now his death was altogether peculiar.

(1) It was voluntary. No one could have taken his life from him. Once when they came to seize him, he passed through the midst, &c. So when they approached him, he spoke, and the soldiery fell as dead men to the ground. He who could still the storms of the sea, and raise the dead, could certainly retain his own life. But when his time was come, "He yielded up the ghost."

(2) It was ignominious. He died not in the ordinary way either of age or disease; but a death to which the vilest of malefactors were appointed, the accursed death of the cross.

(3) It was extraordinary. At the Roman tribunal he had been pronounced innocent. Pilate had washed his hands, as a sign that he had no share in his death. And it was his own nation, the people to whom he came with grace and salvation, that clamored for his blood, and said, Crucify him, crucify him! Heaven and earth were also affected with it. The sky was hung as in sackcloth. The earth quaked. Rocks rent. The veil of the temple was torn in twain. And the centurion who had the charge of the execution exclaimed "Truly this was the Son of God!"

But observe,

2. He died for us.

That is, it was for our benefit. For our salvation. His sole object was our welfare Yet there is more than this; he died in

stead of us. In our place. As our atoning sacrifice. Now this is the essence of the Gospel, "Christ loved me, and gave himself for me." "He was bruised for our transgressions" &c.

Then observe,

3. He died for all.

This is a theological point much disputed. Now generally admitted. It is particularly made known in the word of God. "All we like sheep have gone astray, but the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." Isaiah liii. 6. Then the text, "If he died for all, then were all dead." Now in both these passages we have two alls, and they must both stand or fall together. It is obvious, that if one sinner had to be redeemed, a less sacrifice would not have been sufficient; and a greater could not have been given, had a myriad of worlds been redeemed. Yes; "He gave himself a ransom for all." "He tasted death for every man." "He is the propitiation for our sins," &c. 1 John ii. 2.

Observe,

III. *The grand Design of Christ's Death.*

1. That we should not live unto ourselves.

Every unrenewed man lives unto himself. He acts as he pleases. He does not fear God. He does not acknowledge God. He is a rebel in a state of hostility. Without allegiance. And this is not only criminal, but ruinous They who live without him, shall die without him, and be deprived of his favor forever.

2. That we might live unto Christ.

Now, we live unto him, when the end of his death is answered with respect to us. When it hath saved us. Brought us near to God. "He suffered, the just," &c. When our hearts are graciously affected. When we give ourselves up to Christ. When our lives are devoted to him. When we exhibit his spirit, and live as he lived. In one word, when we feel and act as not being our own, &c. Whether we eat or drink, &c.

Observe,

IV. *The Influence this Subject exerted on the Apostles of Christ.*

"The love of Christ constraineth," &c.

The term is very emphatic. It may signify, it *presseth* us, binds us. Brings all our affections to one centre, even Christ. It may signify also, it *transporteth* us; lifts us above all transitory things, so that persons may think we are beside ourselves. Or it may signify, it impels us. Urges on our course. Carries us out to live and labor for Christ.

1. It constrains us to love Jesus in return.

"Simon, son of Jonas, lovest," &c. He said, "Yea, Lord, thou knowest," &c. "We love him because he first loved us."

2. It constrains us to identify ourselves with his cause.

We cannot be indifferent to his church and interest if we love him. Hate all he hates, love all he loves. His cause ours. &c.

3. It will constrain us to suffer for his sake.

If we love him above all, we shall give up all for him. Yes; ease, and riches, and liberty, and life itself. "I am now ready to be offered up," &c. "Yea, doubtless, I count all things but loss," &c.

APPLICATION.

Learn the sinner's state. His remedy. The effects of renewing grace. And the almighty power of Christ's love upon the heart.

SKETCH CXXXIX

THE GOSPEL INVITATION

"Come, for all things are now ready"—*Luke* xiv. 17.

BLESSED are our eyes for what they see, &c. How superior the dispensation under which we live! Not an age of shadows, &c. Not an economy of sacrifices, &c. Now we have a Gospel-day, a day of grace, and of glad tidings to sinners, of salvation to a lost world. Now the arrangements of mercy are completed, and the heralds of the cross are sent forth to say "Come, for all things are now ready"

Observe,

I. *The Feast.*

II. *The Invitation.*

And,

III. *The Motive urged.*

Observe,

I. *The Feast.*

Notice,

1. The author of his feast.

The blessed God The Father of mer

ries, &c. See Prov. ix. 1; Isa. xxv. 6; Matt. xxii. 1.

Notice,

2. The provisions of this feast.

(1) It is abundant. God is the God of abundance. Nature, providence, and grace all teem with it. Blessings of the Gospel are infinite and inexhaustible.

(2) It is various. And as such, meets man's varied wants, as guilty, polluted, wretched, lost, &c.

(3) It is suitable. Nothing else is Learning, wisdom, dignity, riches, &c., all unavailing. He requires the bread and water of life. Gilead's balm, &c.

"Stung by the scorpion, sin," &c.

Then notice,

3. The characteristics of the feast.

And, observe,

(1) It is a sacrificial feast. All the ancient feasts were connected with sacrifices. This with the offering of Christ as of a lamb slain, &c. We should have had no bread of life, &c., if he had not given himself for the life of the world.

(2) It is a great and universal feast. For the universal family of man. The whole world.

(3) It is a gratuitous feast. Without money, &c. All of grace, &c.

(4) It is a heavenly feast. Author, blessings, influence, &c., all heavenly.

Mark,

II. *The Invitation.*

"Come." Now this implies distance. All men far from God, &c. Prodigal.

1. To what must they come?

To the word of God. To the preached Gospel. Rom. x. 15. To the cross, look; and be ye saved, &c. To the throne of grace, "Let us draw near," &c. To the church of Christ; for first they gave themselves to God, and then to his people, &c.

2. How must they come?

By repentance. Humbly, believingly, unreservedly, immediately. For "behold now," &c.

3. To whom may this invitation be addressed?

To the young, middle-aged, and to the old. To the moralist, profligate, and backslider. To the rich and poor, the learned and illiterate. In one word, to all "Ho! every one," &c.

Notice,

III. *The Motive urged*

"For all things are now ready."

1. *The Father is ready.* To embrace the repenting prodigal.

2. *The Son is ready.* To speak forgiveness and peace.

3. *The Spirit is ready* To regenerate and save.

4. *Ministers are ready.* "And now then as ambassadors," &c.

5. *The ordinances are ready.* And you are freely welcome.

6. *The church is ready.* To own you as her sons, &c.

7. *Angels are ready.* To bear the tidings of your repentance to glory.

"All heaven is ready to resound,
The dead's alive, the lost is found!"

SKETCH CXL.

THE CITIES OF REFUGE.

'Who have fled for refuge."—*Hebrews* vi. 18.

THE apostle obviously alludes to the appointment under the Levitical economy of the cities of refuge. These were provided for the benefit of such as might accidentally slay a fellow-creature, that they might be screened from the avenger of blood. Jesus was evidently typified by them: and it is our design,

I. *To trace the Resemblance*

And,

II. *Then apply the Subject.*

Let us then see,

I. *The Resemblance between the Cities of Refuge and Jesus.*

This resemblance is manifest,

1. In the names of the cities of refuge

The cities were six in number, and one was called KEDESH, which signifies "holiness." Christ is the Holy One; fountain and model of holiness. Absolutely and eternally holy. SHECHEM was the name of another of the cities, which signifies "shoulder." Christ is often spoken of as bearing, upholding, &c. "He shall bear the glory"—"The government shall be upon his shoulder." Another was called HEBRON, which signifies "fellowship." Sin made us outcasts and aliens: by and through Christ we have access to God, and fellowship with him. Another was called BEZER, which signifies "fortification." JESUS is the refuge, the fortification of his

people, their strong tower and hiding-place. Another was called RAMATH, which signifies "elevation." Christ is the High and Lofty One—the Most High—"Name above every name," &c. The other was called GOLAN, or "manifestation." Now Christ is the revealer; he who hath manifested the Deity, by his incarnation in the flesh, and by the doctrines of his Gospel.

Observe the resemblance,

2. In the situation of the cities of refuge

The cities stood on high eminences, so as to be visible afar off, and in every direction. So Jesus is to be lifted up. His person and work are to be made known to all who are near, and to all who are afar off. He is to be lifted up, that all men may be drawn unto him.

3. The roads to the cities were to be kept wide, and in good repair.

Fifty-six feet wide and the ways always open. So Jesus is a way of easy and continual access. The way is narrow as to character, but it is wide enough for all the world to walk in it; and it is ever open.

4. There were posts erected which pointed to the cities of refuge.

For this, is the word of God given us, to show us the way of life, and to make us wise to salvation. And in the Gospel record this is done so fully and clearly, that a wayfaring man, though a fool, need not err therein.

5. The cities of refuge were so situated that they might be reached from every part of the land in a few hours.

So Jesus is a Saviour, not afar off, but near at hand. Whether in the city or village, or on the sea, Christ is a refuge to which we may immediately repair. See Rom. x. 6–10. Yes, Jesus is near to all who call upon him.

6. The gates of the cities stood open night and day.

So Christ is ever accessible. Morning, noon, or evening, every day—every instant. During man's probation there is not a single moment when the gates of mercy are closed against the sinner.

7. The cities were a sure refuge to all who entered.

But they did not avail to any without their gates. However near, it was of no moment. But if within the gates, the refuge was certain. So all who are believers only in Christ are infallibly saved. None can condemn—none harm—none destroy. But however near to Christ, by knowledge or profession, will be of no avail. We must be within the ark to avoid the waters; within the refuge to avoid the manslayer; within Christ to be saved.

8. The refugees were required to abide in the cities till the death of the High Priest.

The believer must abide in Christ until his own death. For he that endureth to the end shall be saved. "Be thou faithful unto death," &c. "Abide in me," &c. John xv. 4.

Let us then,

II. *Apply the Subject.*

1. By showing the sinner his state and danger.

Guilty, condemned, pursued by the avenger of blood. Wrath of God abiding on him. John iii. 36.

2. Make known the way to Christ, the true refuge.

Repentance towards God, and faith in the Lord Jesus. Repent and believe the Gospel. "He that believeth," &c.

3. Urge immediate flight to the refuge.

From the imminency of their peril; from the terribleness of the second death; and from the uncertainty of life. "Behold, now is the accepted time," &c. "To-day if ye will hear his voice," &c.

4. The necessity of a consciousness that we are within the refuge appointed.

"Examine yourselves," &c. "If any man be in Christ he is a new creature."

5. Declare the certainty of the wrath of God upon all who remain impenitent, and obey not the Gospel of Christ.

"The wages of sin is death." "He that believeth not shall be damned."

SKETCH CXLI.

THE WORLDLY MAN'S PORTION.

"Men of the world, who have their portion in this life."—*Psalm* xvii. 14.

THE world is at total enmity with God It is under the control and evil agency of that wicked one who is styled "the prince of this world." It is represented as wholly lying in wickedness; and all its votaries and friends are declared to be the enemies of God. Its spirit, maxims, and pursuits, are at utter variance with the laws and Spirit of God. Our text refers to the portion it confers upon its children. "Men

of the world, who have their portion in this life."

Let us,

I. *Describe the Character*

And,

II. *Notice the Portion they possess.*

I. *Describe the Character.*

"Men of the world."

It does not mean all those who are in it, or those who have merely to transact its lawful affairs, but those who are of it—who are its children, and have the mark of worldliness upon them.

Among these signs and marks is,

1. Unregeneracy.

Naturally we are born of it. Our first nature and our first estate is worldly. And thus we possess this nature, and grow up in it, until Divine grace renews and changes the heart. No influence or education can alter the fact; nothing but regeneration gives a new nature.

Then they are distinguished,

2. For worldly principles.

And all these relate to something of the world. God is not in all their thoughts. Life, earth, and time, are all with them; and God, and eternity, and heaven, have no place in all their thoughts.

Then,

3. Their maxims are worldly.

Here worldly honor is preferred to the honor of God. Worldly pleasures, and riches, to those which are holy, spiritual, and divine. God says, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God." They say, "We will first seek the things of the world," &c.

They are also distinguished,

4. By their associates.

They love those who are worldly. These are their companions, friends, confederates, &c. There is kindredness of spirit, identity of pursuit, fellow-likeness of feeling, &c.

They are known,

5. By the unvarying tenor of their pursuits.

They may choose a thousand different objects of pursuit, but still they are all worldly. Worldly books, worldly science, worldly engagements, &c. They think, and speak, and live, and act, in reference to the world.

And they are also known,

6. By their worldly affections and delights.

They love the world. Their hearts are set upon it; its scenes are beauteous to them; its sounds melodious; its pleasures sweet; their fears and anxieties have all to do with the world. So their griefs and sorrows; so their pleasures and their joys. The world is their idol, and to it they are wedded, and after it they go. Such is the character.

Notice, then,

II. *The Portion the World confers upon them.*

They do not serve the world for naught. They have a portion; sometimes of honor, sometimes pleasure; sometimes its riches; sometimes all of these. More than these it has not, therefore cannot bestow. Now, supposing all these are given, and in great abundance, what is the true estimate of this portion? What its real value?

1. It is unsatisfying.

Cannot make happy. An aching void remains, and the whole world cannot fill it. They may drink a little, or drink deeply, but still the preying anxiety, the racking torture, is unallayed. Solomon tried the whole round, and then exclaimed, "Vanity," &c.

The chief reason why it satisfies not, is,

2. Because it is unsuitable.

The ethereal mind must have etherea. enjoyments. The soul was made for God and spiritual things. The whole material globe, with all it can afford, must therefore be insufficient for its happiness.

This portion is,

3. Only a present one.

"In this life." Only for the present time. A portion now; a portion which can only endure during existence in this world. The honors, pleasures, and riches of this world have no currency in the future state. The portion is for time, man for eternity.

But besides,

4. It is uncertain.

Unsuitable as it is, we cannot make it secure. Mutability is inscribed on all beneath the sun. All things are perishing. The fashion of this world passeth away. We may be smitten in our friends, health, reason; or all our possessions may flee away as an eagle towards heaven. Behold God taketh away, and who can hinder?

5. It is a ruinous portion.

The world is well in its place, that is, under our feet; but it is death when it dwells in the heart. It is the wasting mil

dew, the deadly potion, the blasting tempest, the destructive pestilence. Look at Belshazzar, rich fool, Herod, &c. If a man will make the world his portion, he cannot have Christ's salvation, God's favor, or eternal life

APPLICATION.

1. What is your portion? You may ascertain this by the bent of your desires, by the tenor of your conversation, and by the current of your thoughts.

2. God offers himself for your acceptance. He wants to be yours, to fill you with present blessedness, and lead you to eternal glory.

3. This portion is accepted by faith in the Lord Jesus. He that receiveth the Son hath the Father, and eternal life.

SKETCH CXLII.

CHRIST A GREAT HIGH PRIEST.

"Seeing, then, that we have a great high-priest that is passed into the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession."—*Heb.* iv. 14

THE subject of Christ's priesthood is replete with interest to the believer. His condition is hopeless, except as he stands connected with the sacrifice and intercession of Jesus. On that sacrifice he rests his faith and hope, and to that intercession he looks for the acceptance both of his person and services with God. "Seeing, then, that we have a great," &c.

Let us consider,

I. *The priestly Dignity of Jesus.*

"Seeing, then, that we have a great High Priest."

1. Christ is a Priest.

The term signifies one who ministers in holy things. The priests under the law were distinguished as follows:

(1) They were appointed of God.

(2) Separated to their office and work at a peculiar time.

(3) Consecrated with the washing of water and anointing oil.

(4) Had peculiar apparel and ornaments; the robe, the mitre, and the breast-plate.

(5) They taught the people.

(6) Offered sacrifices.

(7) And burned incense before the Lord. will easily be seen how strikingly all these exhibited the character and work of Jesus.

2. Christ is a High Priest.

Now the High Priest was distinguished from the other priests,

(1) As he was appealed to on all important occasions, and decided all controversies.

(2) He offered the great annual sacrifice.

(3) He only entered into the holiest of all once a year.

(4) He offered the annual intercessory prayer, and came forth and blessed the people in the name of the Lord.

3. Christ is the Great High Priest.

Now Jesus is infinitely greater than the high priests of old. He is,

(1) Greater in the dignity of his person He is the Son of God, heir of all things Lord of all.

(2) Greater in the purity of his nature. "Holy, harmless, and separate from sinners." "Without spot."

(3) Greater in the value and efficacy of his sacrifice. An equivalent for the world's guilt. Only once offered, and for all sins.

(4) Greater in the unchangeable perpetuity of his office. "A priest forever." "An unchangeable priesthood," Heb. vii. 24. He had no direct predecessor, and he shall have no successor. "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and forever."

Observe,

II. *His high Exaltation.*

"Who is passed into the heavens."

Here notice,

1. The place into which he is exalted.

"The heavens." Represented of old by the holiest of all. Described by Jesus as his Father's house. Also stated to be the "right hand of God." "Right hand of the majesty on high." The throne of God, &c. Heb. i. 3; Psalm cx. 1; Rom viii. 34. Exalted above spirits or angels, seraphim or cherubim.

2. The manner of his exaltation.

"He passed into the heavens."

He passed, &c.

(1) According to his own predictions, "Let not your hearts," &c. "Behold, I ascend to my Father," &c.

(2) He passed while in the act of blessing his disciples, "Having loved his disciples," &c. He came to bless—he died to bless—and, while blessing, he was parted from them, &c. Luke xxiv 51.

(3) He passed visibly, and with great splendor. Heavens opened, cloud of angels descended, and with inexpressible grandeur he arose, while ministering hosts chanted, "Open, ye everlasting gates," &c.

Notice,

3. The great end of his exaltation.

(1) To enjoy the rewards of his sufferings and toils, Philip. ii. 6, 8, 9.

(2) To appear before God as the intercessor of his church. There he stands in our nature—our advocate, pleading our cause. "Who ever liveth," &c. "We have an advocate," &c.

(3) To carry on his mediatorial designs. Hence he is to subdue his foes, prolong his days, see his seed, and witness the travail of his soul until he is satisfied.

(4) To abide as the Mediator between God and men to the end of the Christian state. Now God only treats with us by and through Jesus. And he is the only way of access to the Father, John xiv. 6; Heb. ix. 28.

Observe,

III. *The practical Influence this Subject should have upon us.*

"Let us hold fast our profession."

Let us notice,

1. The profession referred to.

It is a profession of faith and hope in Christ, and of love and obedience to him.

2. This profession must be maintained.

Held fast, not abandoned. We shall be tempted, tried, persecuted. Our profession may cost us our property,—liberty,—lives. This profession must be held fast by the exercise of vigorous faith, constant love, and cheerful obedience.

We must hold it fast.

(1) For Christ's sake. Whose we are, and whom we serve.

(2) For the profession's sake; that Christ's cause may not be injured, and his people cast down.

(3) Especially for our own sake. It is only thus we can retain Divine acceptance, peace, joy, and the sure prospect of eternal life.

APPLICATION.

1. Christ's example is the model of our steadfastness.

2. Christ's exaltation should be the exciting attraction to steadfastness.

3. Christ's intercession will always provide the grace necessary to "our holding fast our profession."

SKETCH CXLII.

UNITING WITH GOD'S PEOPLE.

"We will go with you, for we have heard that God is with you."—*Zech.* viii. 23.

THE passage seems primarily to refer to the general conversion of Gentile nations, after the Jews have received the Gospel, and acknowledged Jesus to be the true Messiah. At present we design to consider the text as it may apply to those who having been awakened to a sense of their ruined condition, resolve to consecrate themselves to God and his people. Addressing the church, therefore, they exclaim, "We will go with you," &c.

I. *What is implied in God being with his People.*

1. God's essential presence is everywhere.

He is above, beneath, around. We cannot avoid his presence. "Whither shall I go," &c.

2. God's glorious presence is in heaven.

His refulgent glorious rays shine only in the holiest place. There he is immediately worshipped, and there the pure in heart see God.

3. His terrible presence is felt in the abodes of the lost.

The fire of Tophet is kindled by the breath of his nostrils. From him proceeds that horrible tempest which beats upon the heads of the lost forever.

4. His providential presence is seen in the government and regulation of the world.

By this all things are upheld; world filled with blessings; affairs of nature directed. By the extraordinary interpositions of his Providence he saves his people, and punishes his enemies. Noah, and the old world; Lot, and Sodom; the Israelites and Pharaoh with his host; destruction of Jerusalem, and the escape of Christians out of it.

But the presence referred to in the text, is

5. His gracious presence.

He is with his church in the exercise of his love and favor. He is with them as their *Head*, to direct and superintend; as their *Friend*, to supply all their wants our

of his boundless goodness; as their *Prophet*, to instruct; as their *Mediator*, to be the medium of access to God; and as their *King*, to sway over them the mild and gracious sceptre of his grace.

Observe,

II. *The Evidences of God's Presence.*

External splendor, great wealth, a multitude of members, are not evidences.

1. Scriptural doctrine is an evidence.

When his Word is the standard, when the Scriptures are honored, and the truth held, as it is in Jesus.

2. Purity of ordinances is an evidence.

Where there are no inventions of men; where Christ's ordinances are rightly administered. None invented—none alloyed—none abandoned.

3. Brotherly love is an evidence.

God is love. Where his Spirit is, there will be love. Love to all the brethren; love unfeigned. "By this shall all men know," &c.

4. When Divine changes are produced by the power of the Gospel.

Careless souls aroused, sinners convinced, inquirers directed, mourners comforted, believers edified, &c.

5. When the reproach of the cross is endured.

Bad sign if the world smile and speak well. World at enmity with the church. It is through much tribulation, &c. Luke vi. 26; Acts xiv. 22; John xv. 18; James iv. 4.

III. *The Influence the Presence of God in the Church shall produce upon those who are without.*

"We will go with you," &c.

This resolution implies,

1. Dissatisfaction with their present condition.

Not happy; without peace, and without hope. Have found all to be vain, and empty, and insufficient. Every resource has been a broken cistern.

2. Earnest desire to be united with God's people.

We will now abandon the world for the church; the society of the ungodly for the pious. "This people shall," &c.

3. Readiness to conform to the practices of God's people.

We will go *with* you. Not merely say as you say, but do as you do. We will go with you to the *house* of God. Psalm cxxii. 1. We will go with you to the *throne* of *grace*. We will go with you to the *cross*. We will go with you into the field of conflict, to death, and to eternal glory. As we are desirous to participate in your joys, and blessings, and privileges, so we will cheerfully share in your toils, sorrows, and dangers.

APPLICATION.

1. Let the church be anxious to secure the Divine presence. This alone can secure its glory, safety, and happiness.

2. Urge inquirers to holy decision. Do not parley. Do not delay. You cannot be saved and happy too soon. Go now, at once, and say, "We will," &c.

3. Let believers be anxious to invite those around, and to encourage them to consecrate themselves to the Lord. "Come thou with us," &c.

4. Some have gone back. How criminal! How foolish! How wretched they must be! "Return, ye backsliding children," &c. The Father waits with open heart and arms to receive you, &c. Again say, "We will go with you," &c.

SKETCH CXLIV

THE PROMISE OF THE SPIRIT

"And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments to do them."—*Ezek.* xxxvi. 27

THE text is connected with several great and precious promises. God engages to make his people a separate people, ver. 24; to purify and make them holy, ver. 25; to give them new hearts, &c., ver. 26; and, in ver. 27, to give them his Holy Spirit, &c. It is clear that the text is only realized by those who have believed, and thus have been made children of the family of God.

Consider, then,

I. *The Blessing promised.*

"I will put my spirit," &c.

1. The gift of the Spirit.

In redemption we are directed to the work of all the glorious distinctions in the Deity. God contrived the mysterious, yet gracious scheme. Jesus meritoriously effected it. And the Holy Spirit applies its benefits to the hearts of all believers.

The Spirit of God is revealed to us,

(1) As the *Good Spirit*. "Let thy good

spirit lead me," &c. Psalm cxliii. 10; Neh. ix. 20. He is the essence and the source of all goodness; the opposite of the evil and malignant spirit.

(2) As the *Holy Spirit.* "Take not thy holy spirit," &c. Psalm li. 11. "If ye, being evil," &c. Luke xi. 13. "Grieve not the *Holy Spirit*," &c. Eph. iv. 30. He is essentially holy, the Author of holiness, &c.

(3) Described as a *Spirit of Prayer.* "And I will pour out," &c. Zech. xii. 10. "Likewise the spirit," Rom. viii. 26.

(4) He is also the *Spirit of Adoption.* Rom. viii. 14, 15. He takes out of the kingdom of Satan, &c. His indwelling the sign, &c.

(5) He is styled the Comforter and Guide of his people. John xiv. 16, 17.

2. That Spirit is to be put within us.

Not merely external influence, as in creation, Gen. i. 2. Or occasional impulse; but to be within our hearts. "Dwell" in us, Rom. viii. 9.

The signs of the Spirit dwelling in us will be,

(1) The expulsion of enemies from the heart. It is Satan's palace. He dwells and reigns over the children of disobedience. Reigning sins also occupy the throne of the heart. But when the Spirit dwells in us, "Body dead," &c. Rom. viii. 10.

(2) We shall be led by the Spirit. "As many are led," &c. "He will guide you," &c. Apply the truth; make it clear, &c.

(3) We shall have free access to God. See Eph. ii. 18. He will excite us, influence us, prepare us for fellowship with God.

(4) We shall have a confident expectation of glory. See Rom. viii. 16, 17; 2 Cor. i. 21. The Spirit is the "earnest," or "first-fruits," of future glory.

(5) We shall be increasingly conformed to the image of Christ. Make us fruitful in every good work, Gal. v. 22; 2 Cor. iii. 18.

Observe

II. *The practical Influence this Blessing is to produce.*

"And cause you to walk in my statutes," &c.

The Spirit will,

1. Impart the nature and disposition to serve God.

This must be the new nature the new heart, the right spirit, the obedient mind. This we obtain when we are born of the Spirit. When all "old things," &c.

The Spirit,

2. Will give us ability to serve God.

We require strength, power, &c. See Eph. iii. 16; 2 Cor. iv. 16.

3. He will enable us to advance in the service of God.

Hence we are to "walk" in God's statutes. Hence we are directed to "walk in the Spirit." Now the Spirit will sustain and keep, uphold, &c.

APPLICATION.

1. Let us seek largely the influences of the Holy Spirit. It is obtained by believing prayer.

2. Let us yield ourselves freely to its Divine influence.

3. Let us be careful that we quench not and grieve not the Spirit of God.

SKETCH CXLV

JOB'S FAITH IN THE REDEEMER

"For I know that my Redeemer liveth."—*Job* xix. 25.

REFER to the history of Job. His adversity, afflictions, &c. The suspicions of his friends. His affecting appeal, ver. 21, 22. His confidence in his Redeemer "For I know," &c.

Let us notice,

I. *The Character of Job's Redeemer.*

There is only one Redeemer of guilty men, and that is Jesus, the Son of God, the only Saviour ever revealed to our world; in whom the pious and believing have trusted in every age.

Let us notice,

1. His Person.

And it must be observed that he is represented,

(1) As a Divine person, possessing the true and proper nature, titles, and perfections of the Godhead. Immanuel, God with us. Then,

(2) He is represented as being possessed of perfect humanity. Man with man. Born of a woman. In all things made like unto us, except being sinless. Thus he became the kinsman of every child of man.

(3) He was therefore both Divine and human. God incarnate. God manifested in the flesh. God enshrined in our humanity. Truly God, yet really man. The great and glorious God, yet weak, suffering, and dying man. Such is the scriptural account of his person.

Then notice,

2. His work.

How did he redeem us?

(1) From natural depravity, by the purity of his nature.

(2) From the demands of the law, by his perfect obedience to all its commands.

(3) From the infliction of the curse, by his death upon the cross. "Being made a curse for us." "Dying for us."

(4) From the power of Satan and death, by his resurrection from the dead. Yea, he hath "abolished death," &c., &c.

(5) He redeems from the power of sin, and into the image of God, by the influence of the Spirit which he sends down into the hearts of his people.

(6) He redeems into heaven by entering it for us with his precious blood, and by receiving the souls of his people to his right hand and glory. John xiv. 1–4.

(7) Finally, he will redeem, by his almighty power, all the bodies of his saints, from corruption and the grave, at the last day.

Having noticed the character of Job's Redeemer, observe,

II. *Job's Profession of him.*

"I know that my Redeemer liveth."

In this profession there is,

1. Appropriation.

"My Redeemer." Angels cannot say this. Devils cannot say this. Those in unbelief cannot say this. But the humble devout believer both realizes and says this. "My Lord and my God." "He loved me," &c. My refuge, deliverer, help, &c.

There is,

2. Assurance.

"I know." In religion there is consciousness and certainty. "I know in whom," &c. "We know that we are of God." We know that the "beloved is ours, and we are his." He is ours because we are *sinners*, and he was given to save sinners. He is ours because we *believe* in him, and he is the "Saviour especially of them that believe." We know because we *love* him, and his love is shed abroad in our hearts. We know his Spirit dwells within us, and "bears witness," &c.

Then there is,

3. Confidence.

Confidence in Christ's unchanging existence. "He liveth." He *ever lived*, before time was, or any creatures were "from everlasting," &c. He lived and appeared to our first parents: to Abraham to Moses, to Isaiah. He *lives now*, enthroned on high, as the King of Zion, and as the great High Priest of our profession. And he will live forever. Jesus Christ, the same, &c. He inhabiteth eternity, &c. "Thy throne, O God, forever and ever." Heb. i. 8. If he did not live, he could not hear, or bless, or save. But he liveth, therefore his promises shall be fulfilled, his cause maintained, his church glorified, and all his saints shall live with him forever and ever.

APPLICATION.

1. This subject should be the support and joy of the Christian in temptations, afflictions, and death.

2. It will be the song of the redeemed forever.

3. Urge all to come and experience the saving power of this living Redeemer

SKETCH CXLVI.

MINISTRY OF ANGELS

"Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation." *Heb.* i. 14.

THE Bible does not contain a connected and full revelation of the nature and offices of angels; yet there is a great deal of information concerning them scattered abroad in its sacred pages. The text brings them prominently before us, and certifies that they are all ministering spirits to the heirs of salvation.

Let us,

I. *Offer some general Remarks concerning Angels.*

Angels are an order of beings of superior nature to man. Psalm viii. 5. Spiritual intelligences, designed for the highest stations, and dwelling in the immediate presence of God.

1. They possess high natural perfections.

(1) Extensive knowledge. Said to be full of eyes. Doubtless have distinguished capacities for knowledge and wisdom. Dwell in the clear, cloudless regions of celestial light.

They possess,

(2) Amazing power.

Said to "Excel in strength." Scripture presents several striking proofs. The immense slaughter of the first-born in Egypt, and the destruction of the 185,000 of the Assyrian army, were effected by an angel. The various judgments described in the Revelation, are to be executed by angels.

They are capable,

(3) Of astonishing activity. Doubtless they can move swifter than light; perhaps as rapidly as thought. Striking account given in the book of Daniel, ix. 3; xx. 23.

2. They possess great moral perfections.

Of these we notice,

(1) Spotless purity. Often called holy angels. Compared to light, morning stars, Sons of God, &c. Rev. xiv. 10.

(2) Exalted goodness. They love God; and they have displayed the greatest interest in the affairs of men. Hence they rejoiced at the creation of the world, and identified themselves with the great leading facts connected with the life and work of Jesus. Incarnation, temptation, agony, resurrection, ascension, &c.

(3) They are perfectly obedient. They rest not, but serve God incessantly. They do his work perfectly. Always wait to receive his order, and are ever ready to execute his commands.

3. Let us notice some general things connected with angels.

(1) They dwell in God's holy presence. The highest and most gracious station occupied by created intelligences.

(2) They are evidently diversified in rank and order. Hence we read of angels, archangels, seraphim, cherubim, thrones, powers, &c.

(3) They are exceedingly numerous. Thousands of thousands, ten thousand times ten thousand. Dan. vii. 10. The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels. An innumerable company of angels. Ps. lxviii. 17; Heb. xii. 22.

(4) They are all glorious and happy. Possessed of perfect harmony of powers, of moral goodness, and of resplendent beams of the favor of God's favor.

Let us then notice.

II. *The Objects and Character of their Ministry.*

"Sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation."

1. Their ministry is by Divine appointment.

"Sent forth." They stand in God's presence, ready to obey his commands. They go at his bidding, and are entirely subjected to his wise and benevolent appointments.

Notice,

2. The objects of their ministry.

"Heirs of salvation." The children of God, "who are heirs of God," &c. Rom. viii. 17; 1 Pet. i. 2.

3. The character of their ministry.

To minister is to serve. Hence they wait upon and communicate to these heirs according to the Divine will and pleasure

They have sometimes,

(1) Been instructors. Thus Hagar, respecting Ishmael, Gen. xvi. 7; Abraham, respecting Sodom, &c. xviii. 2, &c., Elijah, respecting the king of Samaria, 2 Kings i. 16; Zachariah, concerning John, Luke i. 10; Joseph, concerning Jesus, Matt. i. 20; Philip, concerning the eunuch, Acts viii. 16; Cornelius, respecting Peter, Acts x. 3.

(2) As deliverers. One saved Isaac from being slain, Gen. xxii. 12; Lot from Sodom, Gen. xix. 29; Daniel from the lions, Dan. vi. 22; Peter, and the other apostles from prison, Acts v. 19, 20, and xii. 7.

(3) As comforters. Thus Jacob, as he went forth to meet Esau; also, when he was going down into Egypt. Thus also Dan. x. 19; thus Paul, before his shipwreck, Acts xxvii. 24.

(4) They rejoice at the conversion of sinners; see Luke xv. 10.

(5) They bear the souls of the pious to glory. Elijah, also Lazarus, Luke xiv. 22.

(6) Angels will assist at the saints' coronation, and be their companions forever. "He will come with all his holy angels," &c. "He will confess them before his Father and his holy angels," &c. John witnessed them all worshipping in the heavenly Jerusalem together, Rev. v. 9–13

APPLICATION.

1. How dignified and happy are believers.

2. Let us be circumspect, on account of the presence of angels.

3. Let us try to imitate them as far as possible; be as wise, holy, good, and humble as angels.

4. Bless God for the service of angels.

5. Not to trust in them, or pray to them, but in Jesus, and in God only.

SKETCH CXLVII.

PRAYER.

"I will, therefore, that men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting."—1 *Tim.* ii. 8.

Prayer is an important—an essential—part of true religion. It is the breath of the new man. The evidence of spiritual life. An exercise appointed by God, by which we approach his presence, and obtain a supply of temporal and spiritual good.

Let us notice,

I. *The Nature*,

II. *The Characteristics*,

And,

III. *The Universality of acceptable Prayer.*

I. *The Nature of acceptable Prayer.*

1. God is the only proper object of prayer.

Neither men nor angels are addressed in prayer. God alone can hear, understand, and help his creatures. The object of prayer should be infinite in knowledge and wisdom, almighty in power, boundless in goodness, and everywhere present. These are the attributes of God only.

2. Prayer is the sensible experience and expression of need.

Hence resembles thirsting, hungering, fainting, panting, &c. The pain of need, and the heart's longing made known to God.

3. God's word is our warrant for prayer.

Here we have authority to pray, exhortations to pray, directions for prayer, models of prayer, &c., promises to prayer.

4. The merits of Christ are the only successful plea in prayer.

We are to ask in Christ's name. John xvi. 23; Col. iii. 17. He is the only way of access to God. "No man cometh," &c.

5. The Spirit's aid must be sought in prayer.

"Praying always with all prayer," &c Eph. vi. 18. "I will pour out," &c. Zech xii. 10. "The Spirit also helpeth our infirmities," &c. Rom. viii. 26. Notice,

II. *The Characteristics of acceptable Prayer.*

"Lifting up holy hands without wrath and doubting."

There must be,

1. Purity of motive.

"Holy hands." Perhaps referring to the rites of the Jews, which required them to wash their hands before engaging in religious services. Now God requires, when we draw near to him, that our motives, purposes, and desires be holy. "If we regard iniquity in our hearts," &c.

2. With earnestness and ardor.

"Lifting up holy hands." Not to ask carelessly, with a spirit of apathy, but with a true heart, with holy earnestness, with strong desire and expectation. Our hearts poured out, &c. Psalm lxii. 8; Lament. iii. 41.

3. In a spirit of meekness and charity.

"Without wrath." In a spirit of mercy towards our enemies; see Matt. ix. 24, and vi. 12, 14, 15. And in a spirit of love to all mankind. Col. iii. 13.

Prayer must be presented,

4. With confidence in God.

Without wrath and "doubting." We must not doubt God's power or faithfulness, or truth, or graciousness and willingness to help. See Heb. xi. 6; Matt. xxi. 22; Heb. x. 22; James i. 16.

Then observe,

III. *The Universality of acceptable Prayer.*

I will that men "pray everywhere."

1. Everywhere we ought to pray.

In need everywhere; in danger everywhere; world, family, closet, at home or abroad, &c. Ever exposed to Satan, and our own frail hearts.

2. God is near to us everywhere.

Wherever we are his presence surrounds us. He is never far from us; always a God at hand, &c

3. God will receive our prayers everywhere.

No longer requires men to go to the temple, &c. The universe is his temple and every clod of earth may be knelt upon with acceptance and success. The prisoner in the dungeon, the captive in his ex

ile, the traveller in the desert, the merchant in his warehouse, the mariner on the ocean, the mother in her nursery—all may lift the heart, or bend the knee, with acceptance to God.

APPLICATION.

1. Cultivate the spirit of prayer.

2. Be instant, constant, and persevering in this exercise.

3. Prayer will be followed with the Divine favor and blessing.

4. All prayerless souls must perish.

SKETCH CXLVIII.

IMMUTABILITY OF CHRIST

"Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day and forever"—*Heb.* xiii. 8.

NOTHING can be more profitable to the devout mind than the contemplation of the glories of Messiah's person and work. We cannot have too high and exalted notions of the Son of God. When our imaginations have been extended to the utmost, he will possess beauties and excellencies, of which we shall have but very feeble and imperfect views. And all his excellencies and perfections are for our benefit and consolation. His omnipotence is our defence—his grace the fountain of our supplies—his immutability the immoveable basis of our soul's hope. It is Christ's unchangeable character which places before us strong and abiding consolation.

Let us, then, just glance,

I. *At the Mutability of every thing that surrounds us.*

And,

II. *Then exhibit in contrast the Immutability of Christ.*

Notice,

I. *The Mutability of every thing that surrounds us.*

1. Behold the changes connected with the earth.

Its altering scenes, its daily changes, its seasons of summer and autumn, winter and spring. Now all smiling and fruitful, and then all dreary and sterile.

2. Look at kingdoms and countries.

Now prosperous, rich, and powerful; then devastated, poor, and degraded. Think of Thebes, Babylon, Nineveh, Athens, Rome, Jerusalem Judea, Egypt, &c.

3. Behold families.

Some elevated from obscurity, others cast down from affluence and greatness.

4. Look at man.

Either as to his body, mind, or condition. All evanescent—fleeting. No certainty. No stability. Light and darkness, health and sickness, sorrow and joy, life and death. At his best estate vanity.

Let us then withdraw our attention from the mutable world, and look,

II. *At the Exhibition of the Immutability* of Christ.

He is the same "yesterday," including all duration past; "to-day," including all time present; and "forever," all the unending ages of eternity.

Now Jesus is the same,

1. In the dignity of his person.

He is the fellow and equal of Jehovah. The true God. The Heir of all things. Lord of glory. Now this dignity is above the reach of earthly influence. No events or circumstances can affect him. He is ever independent and self-existent, "the same yesterday," &c.

2. In his unrivalled glories.

His radiant crown ever resplendent with effulgent celestial glory; his exalted throne is immoveable; his revenue of praise and honor exhaustless and eternal.

3. In the extent of his power.

All power belongs to him, both in heaven and on earth. His arm is almighty. Nothing can weaken it. None can stay its wondrous operations, or say unto him, What doest thou?

4. In the vastness of his love.

Love is his unalterable essence and nature. He is not so much any thing as he is love. And it never can be lessened or affected. He ever remains the exhaustless fountain of beneficence and love.

He is the same,

5. In the virtue of his merits and sacrifice.

His merits avail for a guilty world, and extend to every age and place during its existence. The virtue of his sacrifice availed for Abel, and from him to every believing contrite sinner down to the present moment; and its efficacy is unimpaired—it is as guilt-removing, soul-purifying, and peace-procuring as ever. Myriads of ages cannot impair its virtue, or lessen its value.

6. In the tenderness of his compassion.

This he displayed of old to the unbelieving Israelites in the desert. He greatly

exhibited it during the days of his flesh. He died giving a rich proof of it in the prayer he offered for his murderers. He arose with the same overflowing of his heart; and, though he is now exalted to the highest throne of glory, he is still "our compassionate high-priest," &c. Heb. iv. 15.

He is the same,

7. In his fidelity to his promises.

His word is firmer than the pillars of heaven. He cannot withdraw any word that is gone out of his mouth. Not a man that he should lie, &c. Seeing all things from the beginning, his purposes stand fast, and his counsel changeth not. Not a word has ever failed; not a jot or tittle can ever fail. The honor and glory of his character rest upon the immutability of his truth.

APPLICATION.

We learn,

1. The divinity of Jesus. Absolute immutability is one of the essential attributes of God. Yet it is obviously ascribed to Jesus Christ.

2. The security of his cause All he is, and has, stand pledged for the security and final triumph of his cause. It rests on his immutability. If he cannot change, the results are sure and certain.

3. The comfort of believers. In seasons of darkness, temptation, weakness, affliction, death, Jesus, the source of all grace and consolation, is the "same yesterday," &c., &c.

SKETCH CXLIX.

ADDRESS TO COMPLAINERS.

"Wherefore doth a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sins?"—*Lam* iii. 39.

One of the most affecting and pathetic books in the world is the Lamentations of Jeremiah. It was written by the weeping prophet on the occasion of the destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar. Never was a more striking exhibition of hallowed patriotism than that which is breathed here. Here, too, we have placed before us the effects of genuine piety. For, while the prophet laments and mourns over his country, he discerns the cause of all her sorrows. He attributes all to sin, chap. i. 8. And, throughout this mournful episode, God is vindicated, and contrition, penience, and repentance are urged as the only remedy for the afflicted sufferers Doubtless, in the general calamity, many complaints were uttered, and to these the text is directed, "Wherefore," &c.

Let us consider,

I. *The Nature*,

II. *The Evil*,

And,

III. *The Remedy for sinful Complaints.*

I. *The Nature of sinful Complaints.*

It is obvious that all sorts of complaints are not sinful. Hence, God allows us to pour out complaints before him in fervent prayer. See Psalm cxlii. 2, &c. Thus, too, did Jesus utter that affecting complaint upon the cross, "My God, my God, why," &c. And all who know their own hearts will often find great reason to complain of themselves. See Paul's complaint, caused by the severe conflict between the flesh and the Spirit. Rom. vii. 8–25. But the complaints referred to in the text are complaints of God, arising from dissatisfaction with his dispensations.

Hence among these are,

1. Complaints as to our situation in life.

Not satisfied with our lot. Would be richer; have a different portion, &c. Not content with the bounties of Providence.

2. Complaints as to providential visitations.

Disappointments in business, blighted prospects, loss of friends, seasons of affliction, &c.

3. Complaints as to spiritual sorrows.

Many are the afflictions of the righteous, &c. But some have to drink deeper, &c. Some are tempted above others. Hence conflicts and trials more than others.

4. Disappointed prayers and expectations.

David, for his child; Paul, for the removal of the thorn, &c.; Jesus, the removal of the cup. God does not always see it well to answer our prayers.

II. *The Evil of such Complaints.*

1. It is a sin against reason.

Who so fit to manage for us as God? Shall the child complain against the parent? The creature against the Creator? God sees all, knows all, and can do all things. If infinite knowledge is insufficient, what can ignorance effect? If almighty power is inadequate, what can abstract weakness perform? Reason says, the God alone is sufficient for these things.

2. It is a sin against goodness

What is that which has been identified with our history, more than any thing else? The goodness of God I appeal to life's commencement; infancy, youth, every year, and day, and moment, if God's goodness has not been richly bestowed? Then how ungrateful to complain! What a return for the bounties of heaven!

3. It is a sin against divine faithfulness and truth.

Now God's declarations run thus, that "he will withhold no good thing from them that walk uprightly." "My God shall supply all your need," &c. "They that seek the Lord, shall not want any good thing," Psalm xxxiv. 10. And, finally, that comprehensive, rich declaration, "All things shall work together for good," &c. Now to complain is the essence of unbelief, the essence of distrust.

4. It is a sin especially against divine condescension and abounding mercy.

A man, who is but as a worm, to complain against the high and lofty One, encircled in celestial light and glory, when it is infinite condescension for Him to care at all for us. A *sinful* man to complain, a guilty, condemned rebel to murmur! A *living sinful man!* Why life is an incomprehensibly great and precious blessing. Men, whose desert is death, death—eternal, to complain! Many on the verge of the eternal world, would have given a kingdom for a day of life. "It is of the Lord's mercies," &c.

5. It is a sin fraught with evil consequences to ourselves.

It must *incur God's righteous displeasure.* See the fire of the Lord consuming the Israelites in the camp. Num. xi. 1. And for what? They complained against the Lord. See, also, Jude 16. It deprives of all the enjoyment of divine goodness. It embitters every thing, deranges all the powers of the mind. Hardens the heart. Converts honey into gall, &c. Utterly annihilates the peace of the soul. Totally unfits for heaven. A complainer cannot enter. A complainer could not enjoy it.

Notice,

III. *The Remedy for sinful Complaints.*

1. Look within yourselves.

See your utter unworthiness. Be conscious that you deserve nothing. No right, no claim. All, all is of mercy.

2. Look abroad.

You are poor; others are destitute, naked, starving. You are afflicted, but how lightly! See that *cripple*, who has never walked for years; that *bedridden* person, who has never breathed the open air for years; that person who is in *torture*, in agony, has not had a moment's ease for days. That *maniac*, deranged and degraded. You cannot stir abroad, without having cause to exclaim, "Bless the Lord, O my soul," &c.

3. Look back.

Many things have displeased and annoyed you; but what showers of blessings, what loads of favors, what incalculable blessings! You ought to be asking, "What shall we render," &c.

4. Look beneath.

Think of the abyss of wo, with its multitude of lost and hopeless spirits. Hear the groans, the despairing sighs, the fruitless prayers, and then can you complain?

5. Look onwards.

The voyage of life will soon be over Wilderness crossed, &c. Journey ended, &c.

6. Look above.

Heaven in sight. Heaven purchased and prepared for you. Heaven offered at the end of the course. The Father smiling, the Son pleading, angels ministering the glory beaming. And then will you complain? "Wherefore should," &c.

APPLICATION.

1. Let us cultivate a spirit of devout and constant praise. "I will bless the Lord so long as I live," &c.

2. Seek the renewing grace of God daily. This must make us contented and happy. Old heart will rebel and complain.

3. Be passive in your heavenly Father's hands. Commit all to him, as into the hands of a faithful Creator.

SKETCH CL.

FUTURE PUNISHMENTS

"What wilt thou say when he shall punish thee?"—*Jer.* xiii. 21.

THE word of God addresses both our hopes and fears. It contains many precious promises of future glory and felicity to those who love and fear God. And it contains many fearful threatenings of future punishment to those who obey not the

Gospel of Christ. The text relates to future punishments, and contains a momentous interrogation, "What wilt thou say," when the threatenings are realized, the wrath inflicted?

I. *Let us consider the Punishment supposed.*

The holy nature of God, and his inviolable truth, render it absolutely certain, that all impenitent sinners will be punished.

Observe,

1. Sometimes it commences in the present world.

Antediluvians, Sodom, Pharaoh, Achan, Gehazi, Ananias and Sapphira, Herod, Inhabitants of Jerusalem, &c.

2. It will assuredly be inflicted after death.

See the parable of the rich man, was buried, and in hell lifted up his eyes, being in torments, &c.

3. It will be consummated at the judgment-day.

Then the body will be raised and reunited, and both body and soul be consigned to outer darkness, &c., &c. Matt. xxv. 46. "And whosoever was not found written in the book of life, was cast into the lake of fire," &c. Rev. xx. 15. Psalm xi. 6; also x. 17.

4. It will be proportionate.

Hence we read of some who shall be beaten with many, while others shall have few stripes. Every man will receive *according* to his works. Matt. xix. 27; Rom. ii. 6; Rev. ii. 23.

It is clear from the word of God,

5. That it will be everlasting.

Hence we read of "everlasting fire." Matt. xviii. 8. "Everlasting punishment." Matt. xxv. 46. "Everlasting destruction." 2 Thess. i. 9. "Everlasting chains." Jude 6. Hence we read, also, of the unquenchable fire. Matt. ix. 44.

Observe,

II. *The Interrogation presented.*

"What *wilt thou say* when he shall punish thee?" It is customary before the sentence of the law is passed upon the culprit, to give him an opportunity of stating any thing that may favor his interests, and avert the punishment. Now, place yourselves before the solemn tribunal; bring the events of the judgment powerfully before your eyes; imagine that your doom is pronounced, and it is a doom of everlasting wo: what will you say against the infliction, or in your own behalf?

1. Will you say it is unrighteous?

God cannot be unrighteous. All the hosts of heaven will exclaim, "Righteous and holy art thou, O Lord God almighty." Injustice in God is impossible; and this will be so clear to you, that you cannot plead this.

2. Will you say it is severe?

That it exceeds your desert? This would be cruelty, the very opposite of the benevolent nature of God. God is love, and the vilest shall not have a cup exceeding the claims of strict justice.

3. Will you say that you were not warned?

The events of providence will testify against you. Friends, ministers, conscience will all testify against you. Sabbaths, ordinances, weeks and years of probation, will testify against you. The mercy and long-suffering of God will testify against you.

4. Will you plead for a further period of trial?

"Have patience with me," &c. Alas! the day is over. The harvest is passed, and the summer ended. The solemn decree has gone forth: "He that is filthy, let him be filthy still," &c.

5. Will you confess your guilt, and seek mercy?

This is well in time, but fruitless in eternity. There is no throne of grace, no revelations of mercy, no promises, no Gospel, no Mediator.

6. Will you endeavor to resist the almighty arm?

Of what avail would be the combined energies of all creatures against that Being before whose presence the heavens and the earth flee away? He can destroy even by the brightness of his appearance. See Isaiah xxvii. 4; Nahum i. 5.

7. *Will you endeavor to meet your doom with firmness?*

Ah! the stoutest hearts will then quake Fear will come upon you as desolation and destruction as a whirlwind. Prov. i 27. See Rev. vi. 17.

APPLICATION.

1. Future punishment may be averted Bless God that you are favored with time and opportunities; with mercy, and with gracious invitations. You may now es

cape the wrath to come. Now is the day of your visitation; now know the things which belong to your peace.

2. Timely repentance, and sincere faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, will infallibly preserve you from the wrath to come. Christ is the refuge; the hiding-place. In him you may have pardon, peace, and holiness here; and joy and endless life in the world to come.

SKETCH CLI.

COMPLETENESS IN CHRIST.

"Ye are complete in him."—*Col.* ii. 10.

Christ is all and in all to the believer; he is his light, his life, and his salvation. From him all his blessedness is communicated; through him he is enriched with all the precious promises; and with him he shall spend an eternity of pleasure, and have joy for evermore. The apostle directs our attention to Jesus, as possessing all the fulness of the Godhead, and says, "Ye are complete in him."

1. *Our Redemption is complete in Christ.*

He is the only living and true Redeemer. His blood the price, and his work the means by which it has been effected. He has removed every obstacle. He has met every demand. He has satisfied every claim. He has finished the mighty undertaking. He has obtained eternal redemption for us. With him it originated. He carried it on. And, finally, he exclaimed, "It is finished, and gave up the ghost." Rom. viii. 3; Gal. iv. 4.

II. *Our Justification is complete in Jesus.*

He is the great meritorious cause of justification. He is the medium of our justification. Believing in him, we are justified freely, &c. Acts xiii. 38, &c. Hence remission of sins is to be preached in his name. Luke xxiv. 47. Justified in the name of the Lord Jesus. 1 Cor. iv. 4. And our sanctification is so complete in Christ, that an attempt to unite any thing else with his merits will entirely prevent it from being effected.

III. *Our Holiness is complete in Christ.*

He is made unto us sanctification. His blood cleanseth us from all sin. 1 John i. 7; Heb. ix. 13, &c. His mind, possessed by the believer, is holiness to the Lord. His spirit dwelling in them, is a holy spirit. They are called by his grace to holiness. His example which they imitate, and the model to which they are daily conformed is holy. All their holiness they derive from him, and it is complete in him.

IV. *Our Peace and Comfort is complete in Christ.*

He is our peace. His word, the word of peace. The legacy he has bequeathed to his church, is his peace. His peace he bestows, and his peace dwells in us richly. And we possess all peace and comfort through believing in him. His kingdom is "peace," &c. Rom. xiv. 17; 2 Thess. iii. 16; John xiv. 27; xvi. 33; Acts x. 36. All our consolation aboundeth by Christ. 2 Cor. i. 5.

V. *Our Services are complete in Christ.*

We serve God by the aids of his grace. Our services are only acceptable as they ascend through the medium of his merits and are rendered holy by his priestly intercessions to his glory. Rev. viii. 3. They must all be done in his name, and to his glory. "Whatsoever ye do, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus."

VI. *Our Triumph over our spiritual Adversaries is complete in Christ.*

He supplies us with invincible armor. He is the captain of salvation. "We triumph always in Christ." 2 Cor. ii. 14. "We are more than conquerors through him that loved us." Rom. viii. 37. "We can do all things through Christ," &c.

VII. *Our Tranquillity and Happiness in Death are complete in Christ.*

His death has hallowed the dreary passage. His body perfumed the grave, and irradiated it with hope and glory. Death is now the chartered friend of the believer. "Death is yours," &c. "Death is gain." "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord." "O death, where is thy sting?" &c. 1 Cor. xv. 57.

VIII. *Our Resurrection and Eternal Glory are complete in Christ.*

He is the resurrection and the life. The first-fruits. "He will change our vile bodies," &c. He will judge, and clear the righteous. Confess them, and give the crown, &c. Receive them to his kingdom. Welcome them into his glory. And give unto them eternal life. O yes; all that is sacred and precious in the interests of the believer, whether for life, or death or eternity, is "complete" in Christ.

APPLICATION.

1. How important, then, that we possess the Saviour. Having him, we possess all things. With him, we are heirs of all the promises. Heirs of God, &c.

2. All the honor and glory of our salvation belong to Christ. "Not unto us," &c. How we should labor to exalt the Redeemer. How necessary to avoid self-righteousness.

3. This completeness must be personally realized by the experience of his grace in our hearts. There must be close spiritual union between Christ and our souls. We must be in Christ, and Christ in us, the hope of glory.

4. Offer Jesus, and his complete salvation, to all who will receive him by faith.

SKETCH CLII.

GOD'S REGARDS FOR THE ASSEMBLIES OF HIS PEOPLE.

The Lord loveth the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob."—*Psalm* lxxxvii. 2.

WHAT is the loveliest scene of human association on earth? An assembly of legislators, who meet to enact good and useful laws for a nation, is interesting. An assembly of philosophers, met to elucidate the operations of nature, or the discoveries of science, is interesting. An assembly of philanthropists, met to contemplate the most efficient means of extirpating human misery, and promoting human happiness, that is still more interesting. But the most interesting assembly on which eye can fall, or with which man can associate, is that of a public congregation met to worship God, and to engage in the hallowed pursuits which are directly connected with eternity. To this our text immediately directs our attention. "For the Lord loveth the gates," &c.

We have,

I. *The important Truth implied.*

And,

II. *A glorious Declaration given.*

I. *The important Fact implied.*

"The Lord loveth the dwellings of Jacob." That is, Jehovah loves the righteous in their personal and domestic capacities.

1. He loves them in their individual character as his people

Every believer is a beloved son of God. "As a Father pitieth," &c. "The Lord taketh pleasure in his people," &c. Observe the titles he gives to them. His engagements on their behalf. His gracious communications. His precious promises. They are ever dear to him. Are engraven on his hands. As the apple of his eye.

2. He loves them in their domestic capacity.

See Psalm cxxviii.; Prov. xx. 7; and Jer. xxxi.

3. He loves them in all their religious services.

He regards their closet devotions, and rewards them openly. He is pleased with them when they read his word, sing his praises, and supplicate his mercy and grace. Oh, it is a pleasant sight, to see the various branches of a family gathered around the social altar, and worshipping the God of all the families of the earth. "Happy is the people that is in such a case," &c.

But notice,

II. *The glorious Declaration given.*

"He loveth the gates of Zion better, &c. That is, he greatly prefers the public assemblies of his people over all the dwellings of Jacob. Let us,

1. Notice the evidences of this preference.

Observe,

(1) The special *promises* given. One of the most ancient promises is, "Wherever my name is recorded," &c. Then, the one given to Solomon, "My eyes, and mine heart shall be there continually.' And hear the engagements he made respecting the temple: that in case of war, or famine, or pestilence, if they prayed to him from that place, he would hear from heaven, his dwelling-place, and send them help from his holy hill. Then his promise respecting the second temple was, "The glory of the latter house," &c. Then the New Testament promise of the blessed Redeemer—"Wherever two or three," &c.

(2) The divine *manifestations* afforded. Every thing is full of God. But he manifests himself unto his people as he does not unto the world. Thus the tabernacle and temple were filled with the cloud of the divine presence. Hence see those striking passages penned by the devout Psalmist, lxiii. 1; and, again, xxvii. 3 "How amiable," &c. lxxxiv. 1. John beheld the divine manifestation, Rev. i 12

Oh, yes; in his house he reveals his truth, and faithfulness and goodness, and grace, &c.

(3) *The invaluable blessings communicated.* Here he says to benighted chaotic minds, "Let there be light," &c. Here he speaks to heavy-laden, sin-sick souls, "Go in peace, thy sins are forgiven thee." Here he meets with his disciples, and breathes upon them, and says, "Peace be with you," &c. Here his needy and dependent children receive out of his exhaustless fulness, grace for grace. Here he imparts the sanctifying influence of the Holy Ghost, and makes his saints meet for the inheritance of the saints in light.

(4) By *perpetuating the public assemblies* of his saints despite of all *opposition*. It must be remembered that all persecution has ever been directed against the public part of religion. None ever suffered because they had piety in the heart. And I doubt if many have suffered for having it in their families. No; the powers of earth and hell have ever been directed against its public assemblies. Only think how few and feeble the first churches were. The power of the Roman empire was exhausted to crush them, and yet in vain. There were ten persecutions in succession, and hundreds of thousands were martyred of all classes, of both sexes, and of every age from the child to the gray-headed sire, and yet these assemblies existed—increased—enlarged. And how is it? God has been in the midst of her, and she hath not been moved. Like the burning bush, and the vessel on the Galilean lake, yet God has preserved and perpetuated by his providential interpositions and gracious supplies. The purposes of God have stood, and all his adversaries have been confounded. Now, these are some of the evidences of God's attachment to the gates of Zion.

Let us see,

2. What reasons can be assigned for this affectionate preference.

It is in Zion, or the public assemblies of his saints,

(1) That the *graces* and holy feelings of God's people are most *fully displayed*. In the world certain peculiar graces are to be cultivated. So in the closet. So in the family. But in public worship, there is a demand upon every grace of the Spirit within us. Faith must be exercised from first to last. Hope, expecting; desires longing; affections, burning; gratitude overflowing; humility, prostrated; heart and soul, body and mind, all trusting in God; all glorifying God.

(2) On account of the *holy* and happy *harmony* which is exhibited. Sin not only separates from God, but sets man at variance with man. The world full of distinctions, &c. But here all shades of difference are blended, and each particular hue is lost. And we exclaim, "The rich and the poor all meet," &c. "How good and pleasant it is for brethren to dwell," &c. Here men are brought together, to hear, and love, and pray.

(3) Because it is the *pillar* and *ground* of *truth*. Now, these are apostolic words applied to the church. Here the truth is deposited. Here it is professed. Here revealed, defended, &c. Here is the Lord's consecrated host, who are resolved with Christ to live and die.

(4) *Because of its resemblance to heaven.* In heaven is the congregated assembly of the saints; Persons of all classes; persons from all parts; all met for the same purpose—to worship God and the Lamb; to enjoy his smiles; sit down at his banquet, &c.

> "Lord, how delightful 'tis to see,
> A whole assembly worship thee," &c.

APPLICATION.

1. Do we love the gates of Zion? What evidences do we give? Speak for it; think of it; pray for it; labor for it.

2. What advantages have we derived from it? Justification, comfort, holiness longing for heaven.

SKETCH CLIII.

THE JUBILEE.

"It shall be a jubilee unto you."—*Levit.* xxv 10.

Most of the ancient festivals were strikingly typical of Gospel blessings or ordinances. This was the case with the feast of tabernacles, the feast of the passover, and equally so the year of Jubilee. It is obvious from the Redeemer's application of one of Isaiah's prophecies, that this was the case. Hence he said, "I am come to preach the acceptable year of the Lord

Isaiah lxi 1, and Luke iv. 19. Now this acceptable year is the year of the introduction of the gladsome tidings of the gospel into our world.

Let us, then, trace the resemblance between the year of jubilee and the Gospel dispensation.

I. *In the Blessings conferred.*

And,

II. *In the Circumstances connected with its Proclamation.*

Notice, with respect to the jubilee,

I. *The Blessings it conferred.*

The term jubilee signifies sound of joy, or glad proclamation. And this joyful sound related to five things.

There was,

1. The remission of debts.

Those who through adverse circumstances were unable to meet the demands of their creditors, were now freed from heir obligations. This is the first striking trait of resemblance. The Gospel publishes to a guilty world, the "remission of sins." Luke xxiv. 47. Christ came to forgive sins. Died to forgive sins. Rose again that forgiveness of sins might be preached. And is now exalted to give repentance and remission of sins. "Through this man is preached," &c. Acts xiii. 38.

There was,

2. Liberation from bondage.

Hence the bond-servant was now liberated, and obtained freedom; ver. 39. The Gospel also proclaims liberty to the bound. By knowing its truths men are made free. Free from the manacles of Satanic vassalage; free from the cursed dominion of sin. "Being made free from sin," &c. Rom. vi. 22. Those whom Jesus makes free, are free indeed. They enjoy the liberty of the sons of God. There was,

3. The restoration of forfeited possessions.

Mortgaged estates now returned to the original owner; ver. 25. Now, man by sin has lost his original inheritance, both earthly and spiritual. Lost Eden, and its joys. The divine favor, and its blessedness. But the Gospel reinstates us in the divine family; confers celestial titles; exalts to celestial prospects; and reveals to us, and makes us heirs of, "an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled," &c. 1 Pet. i. 4; Col. i. 5. A possession infinitely more rich and glorious than that which man lost by sin.

There was,

4. Freedom from all toil

It was a year of rest; vers. 11, 12. Now the Gospel is emphatically a dispensation of rest; rest from all the toils and burdensome services, which formed a yoke too heavy to be borne. Numerous rites; expensive sacrifices; divers washings; extended journeyings, &c. We live in the sabbath of the world, the jubilee of rest. "We who have believed do enter rest." Jesus relieves from the Jewish yoke, and gives a yoke that is easy, a burden that is light; and true rest to the soul.

Then there was,

5. Abundant provision and universal joy.

Ver. 19. It was a year of abundance, and of festivity and gladness. So the Gospel reveals a heavenly banquet, a feast of fat things; the marriage-supper of the king's son, &c. Isaiah xxvi. 6–8; Matt. xxii. 1–4. The Gospel calls us to enjoy a plenitude of blessings. It proclaims a kingdom of righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. There is every thing in it to rejoice the heart; yea, to fill with "joy unspeakable, and full of glory."

Notice,

II. *The Circumstances connected with its Proclamation.*

1. The jubilee was to be proclaimed on the day of atonement.

This was one of the greatest days in the Jewish calendar. A bullock was slain as a sin-offering; a ram was presented as a burnt-offering; and the scape-goat, with the sins of the people confessed over its head, was dismissed into the wilderness. Now the Gospel jubilee is based on the sacrifice of Christ. We obtain *redemption*, with all its blessings, through his *blood*. "It behooved him to suffer," &c., for this very end.

2. The jubilee was to be announced by the sound of trumpets.

It was to be loudly published. So the Gospel to be proclaimed, its glad tidings published. Hence the establishment of the ministry for this express end. "How beautiful are the feet," &c. Rom. x. 15.

3. The proclamation was to be to all the people.

Ver. 9, 10. The trumpets were to be sounded through all the land. The Gospel is to be preached through all the world, to every creature. "This Gospel of the kingdom," &c. Matt. xxiv. 14; Rev. iv. 6.

APPLICATION.

1 The blessedness of the Gospel dispensation. Happy are our eyes for what hey see, &c. Prophets and kings desired o see what we see, &c.

2. The necessity of personally realizing its blessings. We must personally enjoy the liberty, the rest, the abundance, the joy, &c. "Do we know the joyful sound," &c.

3. Urge upon all to avail themselves of the invaluable privileges of the acceptable year of the Lord. Now is the time of our visitation. "Now the accepted time," &c.

SKETCH CLIV.

THE AGONY OF CHRIST

"And being in agony, he prayed more earnestly."—*Luke* xxii. 44.

Our text is connected with one of the most interesting and affecting events in the history of our world. It is so whether we contemplate the person of the sufferer; the cause of his anguish; the extent of his sorrows; or the great ends to be effected by it.

Let us, then, consider,

I. *The Person of the illustrious Sufferer.*

He was,

1. The dignified essential Son of God.

"The brightness of the Father's glory," &c. "God over all, blessed," &c. Yet as the Godhead could not suffer, he was,

2. Truly and properly the Son of Man.

Had our nature, body and soul. Made in all things like unto us, except as to sin. Of the seed of Abraham, of the line of David. The child born, the son given. The fruit of the virgin's womb. Immanuel, God in our nature; God with us.

Consider,

II. *The Agony which he endured.*

Now here let us notice,

1. The agony itself.

The text is the only place where the term occurs. The word signifies vehement anguish, as if the whole heart were wrung with excruciating torture. Christ's agony included,

(1) Deep, intense mental suffering. The evangelist says, "He began to be sorrowful." For although he was a man of sorrows, yet all his previous griefs were as nothing with what he now felt, were as drops to the swelling billows which now went over his head. He was now drinking the cup of bitterness, without any admixture of joy or consolation

It included,

(2) Overwhelming amazement and terror. Mark says, that "he began to be sore amazed." Seized with dreadful terror and consternation. The claims of justice were now presented before his eyes. The hour of darkness was coming upon him. He was now entering upon the crimsoned wine-press alone, and was unbaring his tender breast to receive the "sword which was now called to awake and smite the shepherd," the man that was Jehovah's fellow.

Notice,

2. The cause of Christ's agony.

It arose,

(1) From the pressure of a world's guilt upon him. Although he was spotless and without sin, yet by imputation, the sins of a world rested upon him. He bore our iniquities. The whole desert of man's guilt was upon him. The crimes of the world pressed his sacred spirit. He had to bear all, to atone for all. Hence under the inconceivable weight, "He was in an agony," &c.

(2) From the attacks of the powers of darkness. This was emphatically the hour of darkness. Now the hellish hosts rushed to the momentous conflict, and endeavored to overpower the captain of our salvation. None can tell what hard temptations they might suggest, what hellish influence they might exert. Now was the hotness of the combat, the fierceness of the struggle.

It arose,

(3) From the hiding of the divine countenance. Sin excluded man from the favor of God. Jesus was therefore called to feel the bitterness of the hiding of God's face. It is probable that now the spiritual darkness commenced, and continued until he expired upon the cross. Isaiah liii. 10

Observe,

3. The effects of the agony.

He fell to the ground, overwhelmed, prostrated, and sweat, as it were, great drops of blood. How intensely keen must have been his sorrow! how inexplicably deep his sufferings!

Notice,

III. *The Prayer which he offered.*

"He prayed more earnestly."

Observe,

1. The matter of his prayer.

It was for the removal of the cup; ver. 42. As man, he had a natural aversion to pain and suffering.

2. The spirit of his prayer,

Was that of holy submission, devout resignation. "If it be possible," &c. He called God his Father, and reposed all entirely with him.

3. The manner of his prayer.

He was alone. He kneeled. He lay prostrate on the ground. Stretched upon the cold and clammy earth.

4. The intensity of his prayer.

He prayed "more earnestly." His whole soul was engaged. He poured out his heart. More earnestly than he had ever prayed. With increasing fervor. With more powerful importunity.

5. The success of his prayer.

For the apostle reminds us that he was heard, and (as the passage ought to be rendered) was delivered from that fear. Heb. v. 7. The cup was not removed. But he was strengthened. Encouraged. Fortified for the attack. And arose, and finished the work of sorrow, endured the cross, and despised the shame; and stayed not, till the powers of hell were conquered, and the world redeemed.

APPLICATION.

1. Learn the amazing evil of sin, as exhibited in the agony of Jesus.

2. Learn the expensiveness of our redemption. Redeemed by the precious blood of Christ.

3. The sympathy of Christ. Heb. iv. 15.

4. The necessity of resignation to the will of God.

SKETCH CLV.

THE CHRISTIAN CHARACTER.

"The disciples were called Christians first at Antioch."—*Acts* xi. 26.

In this chapter is detailed the success of the Gospel in the various places where the disciples were scattered by the persecution of the church at Jerusalem. See viii. 1. Among other places to which they fled was Antioch, where the hand of the Lord was with them, so that a great number believed, and turned unto the Lord ver. 21. It was here that the heart of Barnabas was so gladdened, by seeing the grace of God; and where he and Paul had labored together for a whole year. Up to this period believers had been denominated by themselves, disciples, brethren, &c. and by their enemies, Nazareans, Galileans, &c. But now, for the first time, at Antioch, they were called Christians. Whether so denominated by the people, or whether this name was given them by divine authority, cannot be determined.

Let us consider,

I. *The Nature*,

And,

II. *Excellency of the Christian Character*.

I. *The Nature of the Christian Character*.

What is it to be a Christian? It necessarily involves,

1. A cordial belief in the person and work of Christ.

This belief must be both the intellectual act of the mind, and the cordial act of the heart. Rom. x. 10. And it must have especial respect to Christ's divinity, to his Lordship. That he is the son of God. That he is the anointed Messiah. And that by the sacrifice of himself he hath taken away the sin of the world. And it is the soul resting on his mediatorial work for acceptance and eternal life.

A Christian,

2. Participates in the nature of Christ.

"Partaker of the divine nature." 2 Pet i. 4. We possess the mind of Jesus. Are created anew in the likeness of the second Adam, the Lord from heaven. Become the brethren of Jesus, and partakers of his holiness.

A Christian,

3. Possesses the spirit of Christ.

"For as many as are led," &c. "If any man hath not the spirit of Christ," &c Rom. viii. 11–14.

A Christian,

4. Follows the example of Christ.

"He hath left us an example," &c. If any man will be his disciple, he must take up his cross, and *follow* him. Conformity to Christ, and obedience to him, are vitally essential to the Christian character. "Ye are my friends," &c. "If ye love me keep my commandments," &c. "My sheep hear my voice and follow me" &c

A Christian,

5. Delights in the ordinances of Christ.

Christ's ordinances are all suitable and appropriate. All spiritual, and adapted to he new nature of the believer. Baptism, Lord's supper, apostles' doctrine, prayers, &c. Acts ii. 46.

A Christian,

6. Is concerned for the glory of Christ.

He identifies himself with all that belongs to Christ. His prayers, self-denials, exertions, and toils, are freely consecrated to his service and glory. "If we live, we live to the Lord," &c. "I beseech you, brethren," &c. Rom. xii. 1.

Notice,

II. *The Excellency of the Christian's Character.*

The Christian character is one,

1. Of superlative dignity.

Dignity of *birth*, born from above. Sons of God. Dignity of *titles*. Heirs of God. Kings and priests unto God, &c. Dignity of *riches*. "All things present and to come theirs." Heirs of eternal glory. Dignity, arising from *knowledge*. Not perhaps linguists, philosophers, &c.; yet they know God, and the mystery of redemption. Wise unto salvation, &c. Dignity of *power* and of *influence*. Like Jacob, have power with God. Hold intercourse with the skies. God pledged to hear and answer their supplications.

2. Of solid enjoyment.

Enjoyment to be solid must bear *retrospection*. Now the Christian looks both to sins pardoned, heart changed, blessings conferred, peace bestowed, &c. It must bear *examination*. Now, it arises from union with God, and the love of Christ shed abroad in the heart, by the Holy Spirit, &c. It must also bear testing by the *future*. The Christian's enjoyments are not such as will vanish by adversity, sickness, or death, but they are from heaven and lead to heaven. A well of water springing up unto eternal life.

3. Of extensive usefulness.

Every Christian is more or less useful. They are philanthropists to their species—patriots to their countries—blessings to those around. Salt of the earth. Lights of the world. See Joseph, Moses, &c. They bear about them the mind of knowledge, and the spirit of love.

4. Of prospective and eternal glory

Now happy and dignified: but their glory is yet to be revealed, &c. "Now sons of God, but it doth not yet appear, &c. We cannot judge rightly yet, of the kingdom, the throne, the crown, the joys, &c., reserved for them.

APPLICATION

1. Let the subject correct those mistakes as to the sorrow and gloom of true piety. A Christian is truly happy—really joyous. The child of consolation.

2. Christianity is a personal thing. No national religion. No church religion. No merely theoretical piety. Religion is in the heart, life, and character. It may be seen, felt, &c.

3. Let believers rejoice in their high and celestial calling, and always labor to exalt the Saviour, and exhibit the power of his grace in their lives and conversation.

4. Invite men to believe in Jesus, and thus receive the Christian name, and nature, and blessedness.

SKETCH CLVI.

THE BELIEVER'S TRIUMPH.

"Now thanks be unto God which always causeth us to triumph in Christ."—2 *Cor.* ii. 14.

However the passage may primarily refer to the apostles, it is language which will suit the experience and may be adopted by all the followers of Christ. Christianity is a warfare, all believers are engaged in the conflict; and it is the privilege of all to be more than conquerors through Him who hath loved them.

Let us then notice,

I. *The Triumph acknowledged.*

Now the triumph implies,

1. The existence of enemies.

The saints have their enemies. Satan is their great adversary; and in connection with him, principalities and powers, and spiritual wickednesses in high places. The world is their enemy. It hated Christ, and necessarily hates them. World always hostile to the interests of grace and holiness. Then their unsubdued nature is an enemy. An enemy within. An enemy partially subdued. Yet rebelling, &c. See Rom. vii. 5, to end. Now, these enemies

are powerful, combined, malignant, and persevering. This triumph supposes,

2. Actual conflict.

There is a regular system of attack maintained by them against the Christian. The whole life is a warfare. A constant contention for the mastery. A daily fighting and wrestling for the victory.

Then,

3. There is victory obtained.

"Who causeth us to triumph." The believer resists and puts to flight the powers of darkness. He tramples on the world: and successfully overcomes the propensities of his nature, and crucifies the flesh with the affections thereof.

Notice,

II. *The Source and Medium of this Victory confessed.*

"God who causeth us to triumph in Christ."

1. The source of their triumph is God.

Their skill, weapons, and power to fight, are all derived from God. All their ability is derived from God He causeth them, enables them, &c.

2. The medium of their triumph is Christ.

"They triumph in Christ."

It may signify either that they are in Christ who triumph, or that their success is only by Jesus. Both ideas are true, the latter we conceive to be the sense of the apostle. Their connection with Jesus only enables them to triumph.

(1) They triumph over sin, by faith in his blood.

(2) They triumph over temptation, by the power he imparts.

(3) Over all their wants, in the fulness of his grace.

(4) Over the world, by the love which he imparts.

(5) Over death, by the influence of his cross.

(6) And over the grave, by the virtue of his resurrection from the dead. They triumph over all their enemies, and always, in Christ. He is their all and in all. Without him they can do nothing.

Notice,

III. *The grateful acknowledgments presented.*

"Now thanks be to God," &c.

1. Now thanks to God should be glowing and ardent.

The soul should devoutly appreciate the blessings imparted; and with earnestnes and fervor bless God for them.

2. Thanks to God should be constant.

He "always" causeth us, &c. Therefore we should bless him at all times. "In every thing give thanks."

3. Thanks to God should be practical.

Lip and heart, and life, should exalt him We should "show forth" his praise.

4. Thanks to God are indispensable.

We cannot be happy, we cannot continue to receive his grace, we cannot triumph, if we neglect to offer up praise to the Most High.

5. Thanks to God will be eternal.

All the saints in glory will extol and bless him forever and ever.

APPLICATION.

To obtain the triumph expressed in the text—There must be vigilance, self-denial, constancy, and perseverance. We must fight manfully, and endure hardness as good soldiers of Jesus Christ

SKETCH CLVII.

SUCCESSFUL PRAYER.

"In the day when I cried thou answeredst me and strengthenedst me with strength in my soul."—*Ps.* cxxxviii. 3.

This is a psalm of thanksgiving, and was probably written after David had enjoyed the providential interposition of God, in crushing the rebellion of Absalom, and bringing him in peace again to his throne and kingdom. The text is a joyful retrospect, in which he refers both to the course he pursued, and God's gracious conduct towards him. He says, "In the day when I cried," &c.

Notice,

I. *The Psalmist's Prayer.* And,

II. *Its successful Issue.*

Notice,

I. *The Psalmist's Prayer.*

"In the day when I cried," &c.

Sometimes prayer is described under the figures of "looking," "waiting," "calling," "seeking," "inquiring," &c. David says, in the day when I "cried."

Now in this crying to God, there would be,

1. A deep sense of need.

This is essential to prayer. Why *cry*, f there are no wants to be met, no misery o remove—no help to crave? All men stand in need; but to pray aright, we must feel it—be conscious of it.

2. A feeling sense of inability.

We must be divested of all self-confidence and self-complacency, before we can call upon God in an acceptable manner. We must feel our entire dependence upon God, &c. In crying, there seems necessarily included,

3. Earnestness of application.

Prayer is intense desire. The soul's ardent longing, and panting, for God. Our earnestness is not necessary to mere duty, but it is a sign of our sincerity, and without we feel thus, we are not in a right state of mind to receive and value God's blessings. Examples, Jacob—Moses—Elijah—Jesus, "He prayed the more earnestly," &c. There must be,

4. Confidence in the Divine Being we approach.

A firm trust in him. A reliance upon his truth, ability, willingness, &c. "Asking in faith," &c. "Believing that we receive," &c.

In reference to this prayer, notice,

II. *Its successful Issue.*

In the day when I cried, thou "answeredst me," &c

It is obvious,

1. That God heard his cry.

O thou that "*hearest* prayer," &c. Yes, God can hear prayer. The gods of the heathen cannot. Baal could not. God is in every place. Never far from us. A God at hand, &c. He sees all. Knows all, &c.

2. He answered he cry.

"Thou answeredst me," &c. Now God is pledged to answer the believing prayers of his people, when they ask agreeably to his word.

(1) On the ground of faithfulness. His truth and word are pledged, &c. Promises absolute.

(2) On the ground of goodness. This induced him to promise. This is infinite—ever overflowing. This is his own reasoning—"If your parents being evil," &c. "If God spared not his own Son," &c.

(3) On the ground of Christ's intercession. "We have an advocate," &c. "Our great high-priest ever liveth, to make intercession," &c. Him the Father heareth always.

(4) On the ground of the groanings o the Holy Spirit within us. The Spiri dwelleth in us. Stirs us up to pray. Suggests what we need, &c. Rom. viii. 26 So that to reject our cries, he must forge his word—act inconsistently with his benevolent nature—refuse to hear his Son—and reject the influences his Spirit had produced.

3. God answered him immediately.

"In the *day* when I cried." Not always so. Would not always be best. Paul besought the Lord thrice, &c. But it is desirable that we should seek a present blessing. We should always expect it now God is now able, &c.

4. God imparted strength to his soul.

Now the soul requires,

(1) Working strength. Strength to do the will of God. To labor in the vineyard. To walk in the way of God's commandments. To work out our salvation. &c.

(2) Strength to resist enemies. We have to wrestle, fight, endure hardness, &c.

(3) Strength to suffer. To suffer as Christians. To suffer with Christ. Meekly, patiently, &c.

(4) To be firm, and persevering. To stand fast. To be immoveable, &c. To go forward. Press towards the mark, &c. So to run as to obtain, &c. Now by this communicated strength, faith is increased—love inflamed—hope encouraged—joy extended, &c.

APPLICATION.

1. Learn the saint's remedy in trouble—To cry unto the Lord, &c.

2. The importance of soul-strength When obtained, exercise it, &c.

3. The efficacy of fervent prayer. God will hear and bless, &c.

4. The duty of recounting God's *gracious* answers to our supplications.

SKETCH CLVIII.

THE GRACIOUS DESIGN OF CHRIST'S COMING.

"I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly."—*John* x. 10.

THE text contains the good design of Christ's manifestation in the flesh. It is supposed that mankind were dead, and Je

sus came expressly to give them life, yea, o give it them more abundantly.

Let us notice,

I. *The Blessing referred to.* And,

II. *The Source of its Communication.*

I. *The Blessing referred to.*

"Life." A life suited to man's state and circumstances.

1. A life of justification.

In opposition to man's guilty and condemned condition. Rom. v. 18, viii. 2.

2. A life of regeneration.

In opposition to that spiritual death which has come upon mankind through the fall. John iii. 4–8.

3. A life of adoption.

In opposition to man's alien estate. By which we become the acknowledged sons and heirs of God. Gal. iv. 5.

4. A life of glory everlasting.

In opposition to eternal death. John x. 28; Rom. vi. 23; 1 John v. 11.

Observe,

II. *The Source of its Communication.*

"I am come that ye might have life," &c. Now Jesus is the great source—the author of life. Jesus,

1. Came to reveal it.

It had partially been made known before. But Christ "brought life and immortality to light." 2 Tim. i. 10. He explained all things of importance connected with it. Showed in what it consisted. Made known the way to obtain it, &c.

2. He came to offer it.

Hence, his invitations and addresses related to it. He published it, "If any man thirst," &c. "I am the resurrection and the life," &c. He expostulated, "Ye will not come," &c.

3. He came to procure it.

And, hence he laid down his life for the world. John vi. 51. "He was the propitiation," &c. By his blood he gave a ransom, &c. 1 Tim. ii. 6. "He died for us." "Wounded for our transgressions," &c

4. He came to bestow it.

We are justified by his merits. Regenerated by his Spirit. Adopted by his grace. Glorified by him, and with him, &c. He is the only communicator either of the life of grace, or of life eternal. Exalted for this purpose, &c.

5. He came to bestow it more abundantly.

An abundance of life exists in him Infinite exhaustless life He has an abundance of life to *impart*—even to the whole world,—to every creature. Number cannot diminish it. It is *offered* abundantly. No restriction, or limitation—"More" abundantly; Once limited to the Jews now published to all mankind.

APPLICATION.

1. Christ has come and brought life near unto us, and we can only obtain it by coming near unto him. He must be received; and in receiving him we receive life.

2. This life must be maintained—perpetuated, by adhering to Christ. His grace and Spirit must preserve and keep us to eternal life.

3. Rejectors of the Gospel. Necessarily exclude themselves from this life, and must therefore be the victims of eternal death. The end of the ministry is to warn, exhort, &c., that they may flee from the wrath to come.

SKETCH CLIX.

THE SAVIOUR OF OTHERS NOT ABLE TO SAVE HIMSELF

"He saved others, himself he cannot save."—*Matt.* xxvii. 42.

THIS was the language of the priests, and scribes, and elders, respecting Jesus, when he was expiring upon the cross. Judea had been filled with the signs of his Messiahship—the evidences of his divinity, yet they had unbelievingly rejected the whole; and now when he was nailed to the cross, they profess if he came down they would believe in him, ver. 40. But triumphing in their hardness and infatuation, they exclaim, "He saved others, himself he cannot save." What they uttered in wicked irony, was full of important truth.

They unwittingly affirmed what is the very essence of the Gospel, That Jesus who saved others, could not save himself.

Let us then illustrate, and improve the declarations of the text.

Let us,

I. *Illustrate the Declarations of the Text*

They declared,

1. That he had saved others.

Ten thousand evidences could have been brought to establish this. Almost every town and village could bear ample proof to this. Friends and foes, the religious and profane could testify to this.

(1) He had saved from disease and wretchedness. Bartimeus. The lepers. Syrophenician woman. Woman with bloody issue. Dumb child. Palsies, fevers, deafness. From demons, &c.

(2) He had saved from death. The nobleman's daughter from the bed of death. The widow's son on the way to burial. And Lazarus from the gloomy sepulchre.

(3) He had saved from sin and exposedness to eternal misery. Woman that was a sinner, &c. Man born blind. Zaccheus. Dying thief, &c., &c., &c.

They declared,

2. That he could not save himself.

(1) In one sense this was *clearly false*. For he possessed all power both in heaven and on earth. He had life in himself—life which none could take away. Hence it is essential to the doctrine of the atonement, to keep in view, "That Christ gave himself." "That he laid down his life," &c. He gave up the ghost, &c. He could easily have frustrated all the plans of his enemies. Yea, legions of angels would have rushed to his aid. A word from his almighty mouth would have paralyzed every hand that was lifted up against him Yet,

(2) There was a sense in which this declaration was true. He had sufficiency of power; but as the pledged surety and mediator of mankind, "It behooved him to suffer," &c. There was a moral necessity for Christ dying.

Had he saved himself, the *gracious purposes* of heaven would have been frustrated. The *predictions* of *prophets* falsified. All the types and sacrifices would have been stamped with unmeaning insignificancy. The *end* of his *coming* rendered void and unavailing. And the *world* must have been *unredeemed* forever.

Had he saved himself he could not have saved others. He did not save himself, that others might be saved by his death.

Let us then,

II. *Improve these Declarations.* Learn,

1. The true cause of Christ's sufferings.

He suffered, because his infinite love and mercy were set upon our salvation. Love brought him from heaven—was the spring of all his conduct towards our world—and which constrained him to offer himself a sacrifice for sin. The mystery of the cross, is a mystery of love which passeth all understanding.

2. Learn the expensiveness of our salvation.

He could not exalt us without being debased. He could not procure our justification without being condemned himself. He could not feed us, without giving his body to be the bread of life. He could not deliver from the curse, without being made a curse for us. He took our sins, and bore them in his own body on the tree. The tempest which sin had created, showered its terrific contents on the soul of the blessed Jesus.

3. The claims of Jesus.

Love so great, so utterly without a parallel, demands our admiration, our supreme love, our firmest confidence, our highest praises, yea, the entire sacrifice of ourselves to Christ and his cause. "Ye are not your own," &c. "I am crucified with Christ," &c.

"Were the whole realm of nature mine," &c

4. The heinousness of unbelief.

To reject the Son of God. To despise his mission. To undervalue his work. And to trample under foot his precious blood.

SKETCH CLX.

CHRIST BEARING THE KEY OF THE HOUSE OF DAVID.

"And the key of the house of David will I lay upon his shoulder; so he shall open, and none shut; and he shall shut, and none shall open."—*Isaiah* xxii. 22.

THESE words, which literally refer to Eliakim, the son of Hilkiah, mentioned 2 Kings xviii. 18, obviously apply also to Jesus, which will especially appear by comparing them with the description claimed by Jesus, when addressing the church at Philadelphia. Rev. iii. 7.

In considering the text in its spiritual application, we have,

I. *An interesting Description of the Church of Christ.*

And,

II. *A striking Representation of Christ's Headship and Authority.*

In the text we have,

I. *An interesting Description of the Church of Christ.*

"House of David."

David was an eminent type of Jesus

He is of the seed of David. Called the Son of David. He is said to sit upon the throne of David. To have the key, &c., of David. The church is obviously referred to, when God says, "He will pour upon the house of David," &c. "A fountain opened to the house of David." "Raised up an horn of salvation in the house of David." The church is an habitation for the Spirit, and the house of David.

1. A house is for shelter and protection.

So the church is the garrison of the saints, the refuge of believers. The Lord is as a wall of fire round about it, &c.

2. A house is for provision.

Here the various members repair to the family table. It is in the church where there is the feast of fat things, the bread of life, the wine of the kingdom. The Lord's banqueting-house.

3. A house is for comfort.

To this the weary laborer repairs for rest; to this the traveller bends his faltering steps, &c. Now, in the church we participate of that rest and repose, of which the world knows nothing. God has engaged that we shall be comforted in Jerusalem.

4. A house is for residence.

The people of God dwell in it. Not visitants, but children at home. Born in Zion, and are the sons and inhabitants of Zion

5. A house is for fellowship.

Here there is union and fellowship with the various branches of the family. One nature, one spirit, one language. One spirit pervading the whole. See Acts ii. 41–47.

Now, let us give a few explanatory particulars respecting this house

(1) God is the builder and proprietor of it. "He who built all things is God." The plan was his. The materials are formed and the walls erected by him. And it is designed to show forth his glories, &c. See Ephesians iii. 10.

(2) Christ is the foundation of this house. "Behold I lay in Zion," &c. "Other foundation can no man lay," &c.

(3) Believers are the inhabitants of this house. All who received Christ, and thus became the sons of God. John i. 12.

(4) Ministers are the stewards and overseers of this house. "Hence they are to feed the church of God," &c. Acts xx. 28. 1 Cor. iv. 1.

Observe in the text,

II. *A striking Representation of Christ.*

"And the key of the house of David will I lay upon his shoulder." Referring to the ponderous keys of the ancients, which were intrusted to the stewards and rulers, and which were so heavy as to be borne upon the shoulder. Now, it implies that the entire rule and authority of the church is laid upon Christ. And this power is described as absolute, "for he can open, and none can shut," &c. See Isai. ix. 6; also Eph. i. 22; Col. i. 8.

1. He has the keys of the gospel, and he opens a door for its diffusion, and none can shut it.

See the case at Ephesus; 1 Cor. xvi. 9; 2 Cor. ii. 12.

2. He has the key of the heart, and he opens, and none can shut it.

Case of Lydia; Acts xvi. 14

3. He has the key of adoption and communion with God, and opens, and none can shut it.

Hence he said, "No man cometh to the Father," &c. "I am the door," &c. "I am the way," &c. "To them gave he power," &c.

4. He has the keys of heaven, and he opens, and none can shut.

He gives eternal life. Dying Stephen. Paul, "henceforth there is laid up," &c.

5. He has the keys of the grave, and will open, and none can shut.

He is Lord of Hades. The resurrection and the life. He will break open every sepulchre, &c. Rev. i. 18.

6. He has the keys of hell, and will shut in the unbelieving, and none can open

The rich man Rev. xx. 1, &c.

APPLICATION.

Learn,

1. The glory of Christ. And,

2. The happiness and safety of the church.

SKETCH CLXI

THE PATERNAL CHARACTER OF GOD

"Is he not thy father?"—*Deut* xxxii. 6.

THE text is a part of that celebrated and truly interesting song of Moses; a song wherein the wonderful acts of God's goodness to the children of Israel are celebrated It also contains a sad record of the defec

nons of Israel towards God. The text is a pointed interrogation respecting the return they had made to God for his goodness; "Do ye thus requite the Lord, O foolish people, and unwise? Is he not thy Father?" &c.

Let us contemplate,

I. *God as the Father of his People.*

And, then, notice,

II. *The Claims which he has upon his Children.*

Notice,

I. *God as the Father of his People.*

In one sense God is the Father of all mankind, for we are all his offspring, and in him we live, and move, and have our being. But God is especially the Father of believers. Unconverted sinners are alienated from God. His image they do not bear; in his family they do not dwell; his authority they do not acknowledge.

As the Father of his people,

1. God is the Author of their spiritual existence.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again, &c. 1 Pet. i. 3. Now, spiritual life is imparted by God. His spirit quickens and regenerates the soul, and makes them new creatures in Christ Jesus.

2. He makes paternal provision for his children.

His children do not want any good thing. "He gives grace and glory," &c. "If your parents being evil," &c. "My God shall supply all your need," &c. Now, this provision includes not only spiritual food, but suitable raiment. The best robe, the garment of salvation.

3. He affords parental protection to his children.

He watches over them every moment. Holds them in his hands. Covers them with his feathers. Hides them in his pavilion. Preserves them as the apple of his eye. Gives his angels charge concerning them, &c.

4. He imparts paternal instruction.

All his children are taught of the Lord. By his word, and ministers, and Spirit, they are instructed in all his will, led into all truth, and made wise unto eternal salvation.

5. He takes paternal delight in his children.

He views them with complacency and delight. His ears are ever open to their cries. He bottles all their tears. Delivers them from all their troubles, and spares them as a father spareth his only son, &c. See also Isaiah lxvi. 13.

6. He administers paternal correction to his children.

Children need it, and will suffer without it. Hence the Lord chastises, not because he taketh pleasure in it, but for their advantage, &c. See Jer. xxx. 11; Heb. xii. 6, &c.

As a father,

7. He lays up a paternal provision for his children.

"O how great is thy goodness, which thou hast *laid up* for them that fear thee." He will give glory, immortality, &c. Receive his children to himself, &c. 2 Cor. xii. 14. "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard," &c.

Notice,

II. *The Claims which he has upon his Children.*

1. He ought to receive from us the highest reverence.

We should cultivate his fear. Be in it all the day long. Set his fear always before us. Hallow his name. Revere him, &c.

2. He ought to have our supreme affections.

"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God," &c.

3. He should possess our unwavering confidence.

Trust in him at all times, &c. Commit all we have to him. Acknowledge him in all things, &c

4. He should have our cheerful obedience.

Be ye followers of God as dear children, &c.

5. He should receive from us our most exalted praises.

Bless the Lord at all times, &c. Praise him for evermore, &c.

SKETCH CLXII.

ON KEEPING THE HEART.

"Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life."—*Prov.* iv. 23.

In this important passage there are three things worthy of our careful attention.

I. *The Duty enjoined.*
II. *The Mode of performing it specified.*
And,
III. *The Motive assigned.*
Observe,
I. *The Duty enjoined.*

"Keep thy heart," &c. The heart is sometimes put for one faculty, and sometimes for another. In Rom. i. 21, it is put for the understanding. Prov. xxiii. 26, for the affections. Psalm cxix. 11, for the memory. 1 John iii. 20, for the conscience. Psalm xxxvii. 4, for the whole soul. So we may understand the text with respect to each faculty, and also as to the entire soul.

1. We should keep the understanding in a state of knowledge.

Let the truth shine upon it. Let it resemble the progress of light, shining more and more, to the perfect day. 2 Pet. iii. 18.

2. We should keep the will subject to God's authority.

In a state of willing and cheerful obedience to God. Ready to be active in his cause, or to suffer for his sake.

3. We should keep our affections fixed on God and spiritual things.

"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God," &c. "Set your affections," &c. Col. iii. 1, 2.

4. We should keep the memory stored with divine things.

Remember God's dealings towards us. His goodness, &c. Hide his word in our hearts, &c.

5. We should keep the conscience in a state of holy purification.

Sprinkled with the blood of Christ. Void of offence towards God and man. Then, as we must keep each faculty, so we must keep the whole heart. We must keep the heart,

(1) In a state of holy watchfulness.
(2) In a state of continued devotion.
(3) In a state of joy and confidence.
(4) In a state of lively activity.
(5) In a state of preparedness for death and eternity.

Then, observe,

II. *The Mode of performing it specified.*

"With all diligence," or with "all keeping.

We must keep our hearts.

1. Under all circumstances.

In prosperity and adversity. Health and happiness.

2. In all places.

In public and in private. World, family church, closet, &c.

3. At all times.

The adversary can always attack us Heart always liable to evil. To deceive us, &c.

4. With all intensity of solicitude.

As a work of the greatest moment, the highest magnitude, &c. Keep the heart as a general would a besieged *garrison*. Keep it as the priests and officers were required to keep the *temple*. Keep it as a man does his *life*, when he is in apprehension of danger. Keep it at the footstool of divine mercy. Keep it near the cross of Christ. Keep it prostrated in the dust of self-abasement, &c.

Then, notice,

III. *The Motive Assigned.*

"For out of it are the issues of life." It is the vital part. It influences all the rest. Main-spring of our moral actions.

(1) Thoughts are formed there. Matt. xv. 19.
(2) Purposes are planned there.
(3) Words originate there. Matt. xii. 34
(4) Actions proceed from thence. Matt. xii. 35.

As the heart is, so all will be. It is the root of the tree. Foundation of the building. Fountain of the stream, &c

APPLICATION.

Learn,

1. The means of spiritual safety. Preservation of the heart.

2. The importance of this exercise. All depends upon it. Life or death.

3. The necessity of cleaving to God with purpose of heart.

4. Urge sinners without delay to believe the Gospel, and give their hearts to the Lord.

SKETCH CLXIII.

GOD'S ADDRESS TO THE CARELESS.

"Be troubled, ye careless ones."—*Isaiah* xxxii. 11

The text originally referred to the inhabitants of Jerusalem and Judea, and is associated with fearful predictions concerning the land in general, and Jerusalem in particular. See vers. 12–14. The passage, however, may be appropriately

applied to all who are in a state of indifference to the concerns of the soul, religion, and eternity. In this sense we shall consider the text.

Let us, then, notice,

I. *Those to whom it is applicable.*

"Ye careless ones." Carelessness signifies inattention, indifference, unconcern, heedlessness, &c. And carelessness with respect to religion is the veriest infatuation, the greatest possible madness. But who are the careless?

1. Those who live as without God in the world.

Never recognise him. Have no fear of him. Never consult him by prayer, &c.

2. Those who neglect the public worship of God.

Many never attend the house of God. Many very seldom. Others oftener. Yet how few, comparatively, with constancy and regularity. Yet God ought ever to be worshipped and magnified in the assemblies of his saints.

3. Those who are satisfied with the mere externals of religion.

Who have not repented of sin. Fled for refuge to Christ. Or given their hearts to the service of God. Who have no fellowship with God, &c.

It will apply,

4. To all who do not give supreme attention to their soul's salvation.

Who allow any thing to have the ascendency, the pre-eminence, &c. Who seek the things of the body, of time, and of this world, and allow the soul, and eternity, and heaven to be matters of secondary importance.

II. *The Reasons why such should be troubled.*

1. God is exceedingly displeased with such.

His face is against you. God is angry with the wicked, &c. It arms earth and heaven against you. See Pharaoh, Nebuchadnezzar, Judas, Herod, &c.

2. Such are heirs to the threatenings of God's holy word.

If the handwriting made Belshazzar tremble, how much more terrific the denunciation against impenitent sinners! How fearful are the threatenings! What awful figures are employed! The whirlwind's blast! The tempest's fury! The desolating storm! The awful abyss! The bottomless pit! The lake of fire! &c.

3. Such are in imminent peril every instant.

The officer is in constant pursuit. Only a step between them and death; and death the entrance of perdition. At home, abroad, everywhere under the wrath of God, and under the sentence of everlasting wo. Without repentance,

4. The endless ruin of such is inevitably certain.

No power or influence can evade the infliction of the righteous displeasure of God. "How shall we escape," &c. "The wages of sin is death," &c. "The wicked will be turned into hell," &c.

Let us,

III. *Show the Careless how they may be delivered from the Troubles of Time and Eternity.*

1. Proper and serious consideration is necessary.

This is the first step to seriousness, to salvation. Consider what you are careless about. The soul, Jesus, heaven, eternity. Consider your real state; your past wretchedness, your inevitable ruin.

2. Earnest repentance, and immediate turning from sin.

Now, stand still. Proceed no further. Make the solemn pause; and turn to the Lord, by confession and immediate reformation of life.

3. Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.

He is the appointed refuge, the only shelter. In him God is well pleased, and with all who come to him by Christ. In him you shall have pardon, peace, holiness, and eternal life.

APPLICATION.

Learn,

1. The evil, and extreme folly of carelessness. Whether we are careless or not, death will come, judgment will come, eternity will come, and, without repentance, eternal death will come.

2. Present solicitude and carefulness for the soul's welfare, will be followed by all the advantages of eternal salvation.

SKETCH CLXIV.

THE INCREASE OF THE CHURCH.

"Who are those that fly as a cloud, and as doves to their windows?"—*Isaiah* lx 8

In this splendid description given of the latter-day glory, the accessions to the church of Christ are so numerous, that, astonished at the vastness and rapidity of the increase, the prophet exclaims, Who are these that fly as a cloud?" &c.

Let us notice,

I. *The Scene beheld,*

And,

II. *The Inquiry instituted.*

Observe, then,

I. *The Scene beheld.*

It is the movement of a great number of immortal souls to Christ, and his church. They "fly as clouds, and as doves to their windows."

Let us inquire,

1. From whence do they come?

The passage relates to the conversion of the Gentiles, and, therefore, implies their previous distance from God and his people. This will apply to the natural state of all men. All are far from God; far from righteousness, far from salvation. Hence they are represented as wanderers, aliens, outcasts, ready to perish. In the regions of darkness, and the shadow of death.

2. To what do they come?

The text refers to "windows," which obviously imply a building, or house. Now this movement of souls is,

(1) To the ordinances of the Gospel. To the feast provided for a starving world. See Matt. xxii. 1–4. Here are prepared, announced, and offered all which their circumstances can require: knowledge, freedom, peace, holiness, and eternal life.

(2) They come to the fellowship of the church. "We will go with you," &c. "This people shall be our people," &c. "One thing have I desired," &c. They first allied themselves to Christ, and then to his cause.

3. In what manner do they come?

"Fly as clouds," &c.

(1) Their movement is divine. God directs the clouds in their course, and gives the dove its instinct by which it reaches its native window. God draws sinners to himself. He speaks, and awakes the soul. No man can come to Christ unless the Father draw him. Now,

(2) This movement is earnest and rapid. Clouds are borne swiftly on the wings of the wind. Doves fly with amazing rapidity. Now the soul awakened to a sense of sin, becomes intensely anxious for safety and flies with eagerness and with holy earnestness to the refuge provided.

(3) This movement is public and manifest. Not like Nicodemus. Grace in its essence is invisible—within the heart. But its existence will be evidenced in the life. Christ's name must be professed. His cross publicly borne. His example followed. Our course must be seen. The church must see it. The world must see it. Devils must see it. Angels must see it, &c.

(4) This movement is harmonious. Clouds move in one direction. Doves fly in flocks. All souls come to God in one way. Source, medium, nature, and effects of religion always the same. One Saviour, one cross, and one saving faith, by which its efficacy is derived

Notice,

II. *The Inquiry instituted.*

"Who are these?" &c. Now this inquiry is the language of delightful surprise, of joyous astonishment. And this astonishment arises,

1. From the variety of character and the previous state of those who come to Christ.

Men of all nations, colors, degrees, and religions. Pagans, Mahomedans Jews, &c., &c. The rude savage and the polished citizen, the illiterate and the philosopher, the child and the sage, the moral and the profane, &c.

2. From the multitude of those who compose this movement.

They shall come to Christ as flocks of doves, or as clouds, the number of whose drops cannot possibly be ascertained. In some respects it was so in the first ages: the day of pentecost, &c. It shall yet be more eminently so. "The north shall give up," &c. "Ethiopia shall stretch," &c. "A little one shall become a great nation," &c The redeemed host shall outnumber the drops of morning dew, &c. Isaiah xlix. 18.

APPLICATION.

1. Have you fled to Christ? Are you sheltered in his bleeding side? Are you the children of his family, &c.

2. Let us labor for the extension of his cause, and for the diffusion of his glory

3. Let us rejoice in the certainty of Messiah's conquests and universal reign.

SKETCH CLXV.

THE MOMENTOUS EVENT.

'But man dieth and wasteth away; yea, man giveth up the ghost, and where is he?"—*Job* xiv. 10.

THE living know that they must die, for death is the end of all men.

"Yet how unconcern'd we go,
Upon the brink of death."

Men generally live as though they should never die. It is an event which is seldom allowed to intrude upon men's thoughts, or is at least banished as quickly as possible. This is far from being wise. It is infinitely better to be familiar with it, that we be not overwhelmed with surprise and confusion on its arrival. O that men were wise, that they would know this; that they would consider their latter end. The text leads our thoughts directly to it, yea, it carries our minds beyond, and interrogates as to man's state in a future world.

I. *The solemn Statement.*

"Man dieth, and giveth up the ghost."

Now this is,

1. An event peculiarly affecting.

The removal of man from society. From all the ties of friendship and kindred. From all with which he has been allied, and to which he has been attached. Dissolution of the union between body and soul. The consigning of the body to the cold and darksome grave, to be the prey of worms. A mass of loathsomeness and putrefaction. The "soul given up." To appear before God. To be a resident in the unknown, eternal world. To rise to the heights of glory, or to sink into the blackest shades of eternal night.

2. It is an event absolutely and universally certain.

The decree has gone forth. The seeds of death are in our nature. The past generations of our species have practically attested it. Daily observation makes it palpably obvious. The truth of this is demonstrated every day, every hour. And it is universally certain. We cannot outlive our liability to it, or Methuselah had not died. Strength avails not, or Samson would not have died. Wisdom and knowledge avail not, or Solomon had not died. Even piety avails not, or Abraham, David, Daniel, with unnumbered thousands had yet lived. The greatest men of war, as Cyrus, Alexander, and Napoleon have all died. Whatever man may possess, he is a sure and certain heir of mortality and the tomb.

3. It is an event to which we are liable every moment.

Death claims all times and places as his own. He not only revels in the field of battle, and in the wrecks on the mighty waters; but he enters all abodes, and every instant he is directing his darts with unerring precision. The street, the garden, the shop, the closet, the theatre, the market, the sanctuary, have all witnessed fatal intrusions of the king of terrors. We live on the borders of the grave, on the margin of eternity. "But a step," &c.

4. It is an event irreparable in its effects

Its melancholy results no power can repair. It fixes the body in the gloomy grave, where it must remain until the resurrection morn. And it decides the destiny of the soul forever. After death, there is no spring, or summer, or harvest for the soul. No probation, no means of mercy, &c. All is fixed forever and ever.

As such,

5. It is an event which demands our solemn consideration.

We should consider its certainty, its possible nearness, its awful nature, &c. Especially consider that preparedness which will make it safe, peaceful, happy and glorious. Never forget that,

"A charge to keep you have,
A God to glorify,
A never-dying soul to save,
And fit it for the sky."

Such is the event declared in the text.

Notice,

II. *The important Interrogation.*

Man dieth, "And where is he?"

1. The infidel dies, and gives up the ghost, and where is he?

Once he was found in the seat of the scorner; once he was seen impiously lifting up his head, and asking, "Who is the Lord, that I should obey him?" But he has entered into a world where a single unbeliever is not to be found, for even the devils believe and tremble.

2. The profane man dies, and gives up the ghost, and where is he?

Once the streets resounded with his imprecations and blasphemings. But where is he? Ah! the seat he occupied at the tavern is now assumed by another, his revellings are ended. A drop of water is now refused to cool his scorching tongue

3. The worldling dies, and gives up the ghost, and where is he?

He was noted for his diligence in business. His riches increased, and he set his heart upon them. It was obvious gold was his confidence, fine gold his god. He pulled down his barns, and built larger, but where is he? Not in heaven, for no covetous or idolater ever passed its celestial gates. Where is he? I forbear. Read Rev. xxii. 15.

4. The poor afflicted Christian died, and gave up the ghost, and where is he?

He had long been looking for it, waiting for it. He was like a shock of corn, &c. His end was peace; his dying room the antechamber of heaven. Angels conveyed him to glory. And among the ranks of the blood-redeemed hosts, he sits enjoying the beatific vision of his God forever.

APPLICATION.

Learn,

1. That death will surely come.

2. That an interest in Christ can only prepare us for the event.

3. That eternal things should have in our hearts the constant pre-eminence.

SKETCH CLXVI.

BELSHAZZAR.

"In that night was Belshazzar, the king of the Chaldeans, slain."—*Dan.* v. 30.

THE long-suffering of God is strikingly displayed in his conduct towards the vilest of mankind. Even when men have become impiously and daringly profane, he has been slow to punish, and has given extended time for repentance. He would not allow the Amorites to be punished, until the cup of their iniquity was full. See also his dealings with Pharaoh, Manasseh, Nebuchadnezzar, and also with Belshazzar, whose doom is specified in the text.

Let us,

I. *Offer some Remarks on the History and Character of Belshazzar.*

Belshazzar was the grandson of Nebuchadnezzar, and monarch of the magnificent kingdom of Chaldea. Babylon, its metropolis, was one of the most splendid cities in the world. Belshazzar's character was distinguished,

1 For idolatry.

Whatever reformation might have been effected by Nebuchadnezzar, it is clear that its effects were now obliterated, and Belshazzar was found among the patrons of the heathen god.

2. For sensuality.

He had a great number of wives and concubines. Spent his time in banqueting, revelling, &c.

3. For daring impiety.

Took the vessels of the Lord's house, and profaned them by drinking out of them, at a scene of infamy and intemperance, when his princes, and wives, and concubines, were assembled See ver. 1, &c.

Notice,

II. *The Events of the Night referred to in the Text.*

"That night," so emphatically noted in the text, was,

1. A night of carelessness and dissipation.

At a time, too, when the renowned Cyrus, with his powerful army, was at their gates. Sinful pleasures infatuate the mind; produce apathy and recklessness.

2. A night of dreadful, supernatural foreboding.

See the company assembled in the banqueting-hall of the palace. The king elevated; the sparkling goblet passing round. Nothing heard but singing, dancing, and revelry. The whole is suddenly interrupted. The king sees the appearance of a man's hand upon the wall—his conscience appals him—his knees smite each other—his whole frame trembles—his countenance is changed—the mirth is interrupted. Fear comes upon the company as a whirlwind, &c.

3. A night of solemn consultation.

The wise men and soothsayers are called in. Great rewards promised to the man who can interpret the writing. The queen called in, and recommends the consultation of Daniel, vers. 10–12. Daniel appears. The reward offered to him, which he rejects, vers. 14–17. He then declares his wickedness and impiety, ver. 22. And thus passes to the dreadful sequel.

4. A night of dreadful interpretation.

MENE, thy days are numbered, thy course ended, thy career finished. TEKEL, weighed; the balance against thee. Holiness, truth, virtue demand thy punishment. UPHARSIN; thy kingdom is divided and given to the Medes and Persians

Even now the army is passing through the bed of thy river.

5. A night of fearful doom.

The city taken, the revellers destroyed, and Belshazzar slain! In the events of this night we see,

(1) The immutability of God's word. Two hundred years before it had been clearly and fully predicted. Isaiah xiii. 17, and xlv. 1, xlvii. 1. See l. 1, and li. 5, &c.

(2) That there is no security against the displeasure of God. Dignity, wealth, arms, combinations are all fruitless, &c. "Who hath hardened himself," &c.

(3) The way of pleasure is the way of death. It steels the conscience, intoxicates the soul, ripens for ruin, &c.

(4) Let the careless sinner be admonished, and reflect on the certainty of his ruin, unless he repent of his wickedness, and seek mercy.

(5) The day of trial and doom will come to every man. Happy all they who will be able to give up their accounts with joy, and not with grief.

SKETCH CLXVII.

THE SOLEMN WARNING.

"Prepare to meet thy God."—*Amos* iv. 12.

How truly solemn these words! And how deserving of the serious, prayerful consideration of every human being. Let us try to deduce such observations, and to produce such impressions from the words as they are obviously calculated to effect.

Observe,

I. *That an Interview between God and Man is inevitable.*

We are always under the immediate eye of Deity. He is round about both our bed and path. Every instant we are surrounded by his presence. See Psalm cxxxix. 1–10. But there are two specific interviews which will be direct and unavoidable.

1. In the hour of dissolution.

Death is the officer of God. Acts under his immediate authority and control. An officer no money can bribe, no influence thwart, no skill evade, no power resist. Then when the body returns to the dust, the soul will ascend naked into the immediate presence of God who made it.

2. In the day of judgment.

After death the judgment. "We must all appear," &c. Then God will confront all his creatures. Every eye shall see him! every soul be judged by him, &c. See Psalm l. 3, 4; Daniel vii. 9, 10, 2 Thess. i. 7, 8; Rev. xx. 11

Notice,

II. *Preparation is necessary to make these Meetings safe and happy.*

In our natural, guilty, unholy state, God must, from the holiness of his nature, punish and exclude from his presence and glory. Such a meeting will involve the sinner in shame, confusion, condemnation, and eternal death. How necessary, then, is preparation!

1. The preparation of sincere repentance.

"And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent," &c. "Except ye repent," &c.

2. The preparation of faith in the Lord Jesus.

God not only requires repentance towards himself, but "faith in the Lord Jesus Christ." "He that believeth," &c. Faith unites us to Christ. And makes us heirs of all the blessings of his mediatorial work. In Christ we have pardon, peace, adoption, and endless life.

3. The preparation of regeneration.

"Must be born again." Have a new heart and right spirit. Renewed in the spirit of our minds. "Without holiness," &c.

4. The preparation of good works.

Not works of merit. Not works to be accepted of God, but works of goodness, produced in us, by his Holy Spirit. Works of devotion to God, and beneficence, and compassion to men. See Matt. xxv. 31 &c.

Let us then,

III. *Urge the Admonition of the Text.*

"Prepare" to meet thy God.

1. Prepare scripturally.

Do not form a religion of your own. Do not depend on any foundation except the Saviour. Do not attempt to mingle any thing with the pure waters of salvation. Adhere to the word. Abide by the gospel Renounce all Saviours, but Christ Jesus Neglect no part of the gospel plan. See former head. All essentially necessary.

2. Prepare earnestly

Let it be your first and chief care. Have your most vigorous powers. Occupy your chief attention. Think what is pending. Look upward—forward—downward. Agonize to enter the strait gate, and to be found in the way of eternal life. "Give all diligence," &c.

3. Prepare immediately.

Delays are extremely dangerous. Eternal joy or everlasting woes depend perhaps upon the present *now*. "Behold now," &c. "To-day, if ye will hear," &c.

4. Let all prepare.

Ye young. Ye middle aged. Ye with gray hairs and hoary heads. Ye rich, and learned, and great; and ye poor, and illiterate, and wretched. You are each and all concerned. The text belongs to every one of you. Be wise, obey the Saviour, and prepare to meet your God.

APPLICATION.

Let the subject,

Awaken the careless—arouse the supine—alarm the impenitent—and stimulate the believer, to abound yet more and more in the work of the Lord.

SKETCH CLXVIII.

ATTACHMENT TO GOD'S HOUSE

"We will not forsake the house of our God."—*Neh.* x. 39.

This book contains the history of the Jews after their return from captivity in Babylon. Their adversity had proved very salutary to their souls, and they now cheerfully unite in a covenant to serve God, and to walk in his ordinances. Among the various resolutions dictated by their piety, was the one contained in the text. "We will not forsake," &c.

Let us notice,

I. *The Object of their Resolution.*

"The house of their God." The universe is God's great house, which he fills with his all-pervading presence. Heaven is his throne, his imperial palace, the habitation of his holiness. His gracious residence of old was in the tabernacle, and the succeeding temples. Under the spiritual economy of the gospel, "Wherever two or three are assembled in Christ's name," is God's house, the place of his manifestation. All places of public worship may be styled God's house,

1. As He is the proprietor and owner of them.

His name is recorded. To him, and for his glory erected. He claims them as his own,

2. As He dwells in them.

"The Lord hath chosen Zion," &c. Here he meets and communes with his people, the place of audience and fellowship with his spiritual family.

3. Here he manifests his glory.

Makes the place of his feet glorious. The saints here see his beauty, &c. His perfections are magnified. Exhibiting his truth, holiness, goodness, grace, &c.

4. Here he bestows his chiefest blessings.

Illumination, conversion, adoption, sanctification, comfort, joy, peace, and blissful prospects of future glory.

Notice,

II. *The Resolution itself.*

"We will not forsake" the house of our God. Now this resolution obviously includes,

1. Constant and regular attendance.

As regularly as the workman goes to the house of labor. The merchant, to the house of merchandise. The scholar, to the house of instruction. The hungry, to the house of provisions, &c. It is to make it as our own house. To dwell in it, &c. "Not forsaking," &c.

2. A lively interest in its welfare and prosperity.

We will seek the good of the Lord's house, &c. Our praises shall hallow it. Our influence support it. Our prayers shall be for it Our hearts shall be in it, &c. "If I forget thee, Jerusalem," &c.

Notice,

III. *The Reasons on which this Resolution may be properly grounded.*

It is grounded,

1. On our gracious union with God.

It is the house of "*our God.*" And all connected with God, should be dear and sacred to us. His word. His ordinances. His people. Therefore, his house. It is grounded,

2. On being our clear and imperative duty.

Public worship is of his own appointment. It is enjoined by God, and therefore authoritative and binding. To forsake

God's house, is to forsake his expressly revealed law.

It is grounded,

3. On our public profession.

We are God's people, and, of course, his house is our home. Our spiritual residence. Our beloved abode. We are the Lord's, and as such, must appear in his courts.

It is grounded,

4. On the special advantages we shall derive from it.

Desires will be exalted. Soul elevated to God. Mind enlarged. Graces revived. Spirit cheered. The soul enriched with all spiritual blessings in Christ. "A day in God's courts is better," &c "They who wait upon God," &c.

It is grounded,

5. On its connection with the celestial world.

The house of God, "is the gate of heaven," &c. The celestial temple is supplied from that beneath. This is preparatory to the other. And here we are nurtured in grace, and thus fitted for eternal glory

APPLICATION.

1 Alas! how many professors are indifferent to the welfare of God's house. Is it not an unfailing indication that the heart is not right with God?

2. Let the subject inspire the sincere friends of Christ to more ardent zeal for the diffusion of the divine glory.

3. How suited is God's house to every description. The reckless here are warned. The supine aroused. The inquirer directed. The mourner comforted. The faithful established, &c.

SKETCH CLXIX

REGENERATION.

"Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."—*John* iii. 3.

OBSERVE the occasion of these words. The application of Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews, to Jesus. See his complimentary address to Christ, "Rabbi, we know," &c., ver. 2. The reply of Jesus forms the text, For he said unto him, "Except a man," &c.

Let us consider,

The Nature, and Necessity of Regeneration.

I. *The Nature of Regeneration.*

What is it to be born again? It cannot mean a second natural birth, as Nicodemus supposed. It does not mean merely the baptism of water. See ver. 5. It does not mean external reformation. Nor yet a correct creed, and a public profession of religion. It is obvious that regeneration includes an entire change of heart. The renewal of the soul in the likeness of the divine image.

Observe then,

1. The propriety of the metaphor.

(1) As by our first birth we become partakers of human nature; by the second, we are made partakers of the divine nature. Children of God. Sons of God, &c.

(2) As by our first birth, we are introduced into the natural world: so by our second birth, into the world or kingdom of grace.

(3) As by our first birth we receive the image of our natural parents: so by the second, we receive the image of the second Adam, the Lord from heaven.

(4) As in our first birth, we possess all the powers and faculties of manhood, in embryo: so in the spiritual birth, we have all the essential parts of the new man.

(5) As in our natural birth, we pass through a great and astonishing change: so in the spiritual birth, all old things pass away, and all things become new.

Let us then notice,

2. The characteristics of this change.

(1) Regeneration is a divine change It is beyond the power of any created agent to effect it. It is God who must take away the heart of stone, &c. It is the Spirit that quickeneth. Born of the Spirit.

(2) Regeneration is an instantaneous change. There will be a preparatory process; but there is no medium between life and death. God says, Let there be light and life, and light and life are at once produced.

(3) Regeneration is a mysterious change. It is not visible in its operation. Likened to the wind. Resembles the power of vegetation, &c.

(4) Regeneration is an entire change. The understanding is enlightened. The judgment made sound. The will subju

gated. The affections spiritualized. The conscience cleansed. The soul becomes the seat of light, and harmony, and goodness.

(5) It is a visible change. It will be manifest to those around. The tongue—the temper—the life—all will exhibit it. "Living epistles read and known," &c. Now fruits of righteousness to the glory of God.

Notice,

II. *The Necessity of Regeneration.*

1. It is necessary to communion with God.

There can be no fellowship between light and darkness, sin and holiness, a depraved heart, and immaculate Deity.

2. It is necessary to an interest in the promises.

The promises are made to believers, to God's children. They are the patrimony of the household of faith. Without regeneration we have therefore no lot or part in them.

3. It is necessary to holiness.

We cannot be holy until we are made partakers of a new and holy nature. We must be God's children, before we can grow in the divine likeness.

4. It is necessary to acceptable obedience.

Prayer—praise—meditation—works of goodness, &c., can only be offered acceptably by those who are renewed in the spirit of their minds. The fountian must be made good, before the streams can be so.

5. It is necessary to our entrance into heaven.

Heaven is a holy place. God's holy presence. Holy pleasures. Holy services. And nothing that defileth can possibly enter. "Without holiness," &c. The carnal mind is utterly incapable of its pleasures and enjoyments. Therefore, except a man be born again, he cannot enter into the kingdom of grace here, or the kingdom of glory hereafter.

APPLICATION.

1. Let the subject lead to serious and careful examination. How necessary it is strictly to search and try ourselves. Prove your own selves, &c.

2. Let formalists especially avoid deception here. A name. A creed. A profession. A decent life is not enough. "Ye must be born again."

3. Appeal to the unconverted, as to the great necessity of seriously reflecting upon this subject. By faith in Christ, we become the sons of God. John i. 12.

4. The regenerated are required to grow in grace. To pass from the state of childhood to youth, then to maturity—then to a rich and golden old age, so as to be fully ripe for everlasting glory.

SKETCH CLXX.

LOVE TO JESUS.

"Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?"—*John* xxi. 17

This appears to have been the first conversation between Christ and Peter after the Saviour's resurrection. After they had dined, Jesus therefore embraced the opportunity of interrogating Peter as to his love to him. However painful this might be to Peter, yet it gave him an opportunity of again avowing his attachment, after he had so wickedly apostatized from him, and denied him. Jesus therefore addressed him, "Simon, son of Jonas," not Peter,—for Peter signified Rock, and for the present, at least, he had forfeited all claim to stability,—"lovest thou me?" Peter humbly, yet sincerely, declared his love, appealing to the Saviour's own omniscience, and was then reinstated in his office, and charged by the great Shepherd of the flock to feed his lambs, and to feed his sheep. The subject of the text is love to Jesus

Let us consider,

I. *The Nature of Love to Jesus.*

Now love to Jesus implies,

1. A knowledge of Jesus.

We may love an unseen object, but not one which is unknown to us. Love to Jesus must therefore be preceded by an acquaintance with the revelation given of him in the gospel. All true and saving religion must commence with illumination of mind.

2. A believing reception of the truth concerning Jesus.

We must not only know of Christ, but cordially embrace the record given concerning him. Believe in him as loving us and giving himself for us

3. A hearty affection and esteem for Christ.

Our souls appreciating his excellences. Captivated with his charms. Intensely affected with his love to us. "We love him because he first loved us." His name our joy his presence our delight, his favor our bliss.

It includes,

4. Confidence in Christ.

Love to him must be confidential. The soul rests in its love. Relies implicitly upon him. "This is my beloved, and this is my friend." "Whom have I in heaven," &c. Observe,

II. *The Characteristics of Love to Jesus.*

1. It is a divine principle.

Not natural to man to love Christ. Heart in a state of enmity, &c. Not attainable by human influence, as study, education, &c. Love is of God, and from heaven. It is the fruit of the Spirit. "The love of God shed abroad in our hearts," &c.

2. It is a conscious principle.

If we love Jesus, we must be sensible of it—must know it. It is not a matter of peradventure, of doubt, &c. Our desires, our thoughts, our delights, our lives, will all tend to set us right in this matter. "Whom having not seen ye love," &c. Peter replied, "Yea, Lord," &c.

3. It is an essential principle

We may be saved without shining parts, or splendid gifts. We may have many frailties, &c. Even have given way to sudden gusts of temptation, &c. &c. But no man can be accepted of God, or saved, without love to Jesus. Love to Christ is the essence of true piety. He that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, &c.

4. Love to Jesus must be the pre-eminent principle.

It is not inconsistent with philanthropy, love to species, or patriotism, love to country. Or with conjugal, paternal, or fraternal affection. Nay, these it hallows, and increases. But over all these it must have the ascendency. These must be loved in a subordinate degree. "If any man love father," &c.

5. Love to Jesus must be an abiding,—a growing principle.

It must be "abounding," be "made perfect," we must be "rooted and grounded in love." "Walk in love." It must strengthen with our strength, and grow with our growth, and mature with our years—until it is perfected in the regions of love for ever. Consider,

III. *The Evidences of Love to Jesus.*

1. The tongue will express it.

Simon replied, "Yea, Lord," &c. From the fulness of the heart, the mouth speaketh. Love in the heart will force its way—it must have egress, and the mouth will confess Christ to salvation.

2. The profession will exhibit it.

Love to Christ must both be confessed and professed. If any man love Christ, he will follow Christ. Christ's church will be his abode—his ordinances, his delight. The cross his boast. "God forbid," &c.

3. The practice will evince it.

Love to Jesus is an obedient principle. "This is the love of Christ, that we keep his commandments," &c. "If ye love me," &c.

4. Our sacrifices will establish it.

Idols will be renounced. Pride, pleasure, the world, self, &c. Christ's cross will be borne, &c. Reproach cheerfully endured, &c. "I beseech you, brethren," &c. "I am crucified with Christ," &c.

Let us,

IV. *Justify supreme Love to Jesus.*

Love to Jesus accords,

1. With the soundest reason.

In him is all that is intellectual, dignified, and beautiful. He is the perfection of excellency, the fountain of goodness. None on earth or in heaven to be compared to him, &c.

2. With principles of gratitude.

We profess to love philanthropists, patriots, friends, benefactors, &c. O think what he left, what he assumed, what he endured and suffered for us.

"When I survey the wondrous cross," &c.

Love to Jesus is founded,

3. On its present advantages.

The Father will love us, and come to us, and make his abode with us. He will manifest himself, &c. "All things will work together for good," &c.

4. On its future results.

Shall I say, divine sympathy in trouble, support in sickness; peace in death; confession and approbation in the day of judgment; and a throne and crown in the kingdom of glory forever.

APPLICATION

Learn,

1. The essence of religion is love.

2. Genuine love will be an operative, influential principle.

3. "If any man love nc the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema maranatha!"

SKETCH CLXXI.

CHRIST A ROCK OF OFFENCE, &c.

"Behold, I lay in Zion a stumbling-stone and rock of offence, and whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed."—*Rom.* ix. 33.

THE apostle had been vindicating the sovereign right of Deity to cast off the Jewish nation, and to extend his favor and the privileges of the Gospel to the Gentiles. He shows, however, that God did not do this without reason; for he remarks, that Israel "sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law, for they stumbled at that stumbling-stone," ver. 32. Then he takes notice that this had been predicted, as it is written, "Behold, I lay in Zion," &c. Is. viii. 14. The text presents,

I. *What Christ was to the unbelieving Jews.*

II. *What he is to those who believe.*

Notice,

I. *What Christ was to the unbelieving Jews.*

"A stumbling-block and rock of offence." They stumbled and were offended.

1. On account of the meanness of his appearance.

His parentage, his birth-place, his poverty, all offended their pride. They expected a Messiah possessing worldly riches, and dignity, and glory.

2. On account of the spirituality of his reign.

They wanted an earthly potentate, one to break the yoke of the Romans, one to elevate them to temporal aggrandizement and power. Jesus offered no worldly emoluments. He headed no army. He preached submission to existing authorities, and declared solemnly that his kingdom was not of this world.

3. On account of the plainness of his reproofs.

They imagined themselves to be the only sanctified people on earth. The only favorites of heaven. Jesus denounced their professions to be hypocrisy. He exposed their love of praise, their deceit, and their oppressions; and urged upon them a religion of humility, of sincerity, and goodness. Matt. xxiii. 1–39.

4. They were offended at his condescension and mercy.

He ate with publicans and sinners. He removed misery wherever he came. He forgave the sins of harlots and notorious sinners. And hence they utterly refused his doctrine, and associated his name with all that was evil. How many of you have been offended at the claims and doctrines of Jesus, and have stumbled over him?

Notice,

II. *What Jesus is to those who believe.*

"But whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed." Now here notice,

1. The character.

"Whosoever believeth." Now, this believing is cordially receiving with the whole heart, the testimony God has given of the Son, and resting entirely on Jesus for acceptance and eternal life. Then observe,

2. The declaration.

"They shall not be ashamed." Now he who cordially believes on Christ, shall not be ashamed,

(1) Of the object of his faith. He shall look upon Jesus with very different feelings to the captious, unbelieving Jew. He will exult in his name Be exalted through his humiliation. Glory in his cross. "Count all things but loss," &c

"Ashamed of Jesus, sooner far," &c.

(2) Of the doctrines of Christ. Faith repentance, holiness, &c.

(3) Of the ordinances of Christ. Baptism, Lord's Supper, preached gospel, &c.

(4) Nor of the followers of Christ. However poor, illiterate, despised, persecuted, &c.

(5) Not ashamed to profess Christ, and suffer for Christ. Suffer joyfully in his cause, and for his sake. But there is another reading. He that believeth shall "not make haste;" he shall not be agitated in trouble, but in patience shall possess his soul, and with fortitude abide in the trying hour. Moreover, it may be read, He that believeth shall not be "confounded." His adversaries shall not effect his ruin; and in the great day of judgment he shall stand acquitted, and be publicly confessed by Jesus, while unbelievers will be covered with confusion, and everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord &c.

APPLICATION.

1. Rejectors of Christ must perish. Wo unto them who stumble, and are offended in him. There is no other Saviour, and how utterly fearful at last, will be the "wrath of the Lamb!"

2. The believer's happiness and safety are certain and secure. His basis is the rock of eternal ages. His hopes shall be realized, and he shall not be ashamed, agitated, or confounded.

3. Urge upon all to come to Jesus, to believe in him, and have everlasting life.

SKETCH CLXXII.

ON DOING GOOD

"As we have, therefore, opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith."—*Gal.* vi. 10

CHRISTIANITY embraces three grand objects, God, ourselves, and our fellow-men. We are to seek the glory of God in all things, to give diligence to make our calling and election sure, and to the utmost of our power, "to do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith."

Let us,

I. *Illustrate the Duties of the Text.*

And,

II. *Enforce them.*

I. *Let us Illustrate the Duties of the Text.*

The duty inculcated is goodness. "We are to do good."

Now this necessarily supposes that we are renewed in our minds. In our natural state we cannot do good. We must first be made partakers of divine goodness, before we can diffuse it abroad. The Christian may do good,

(1) By the exhibition of a pious example. Thus to be monitors to those around. "Let your light so shine," &c. As Enoch, Noah, Lot, &c. did.

(2) By imparting spiritual instruction. We must hold forth the word of life. Direct the ignorant, &c. All who have experienced Christ's religion, should in some way or other try to teach it to others.

(3) By our prayers and supplications. See 1 Tim. ii. 1. This we can always do.

(4) By imparting of our substance to the poor and necessitous. "Pure religion," &c. James i. 27; ii. 15, &c.; Heb. xiii. 16.

Notice,

2. The extent of the goodness we are to exercise.

"To all men." Those near to us, and those that are afar off. Friends and foes. Color, state, character condition, religion, are not to affect us. All men who need are to be the objects of our goodness.

Observe,

3. The seasonableness and constancy of our goodness.

"As we have opportunity." As we may possess ability As God shall give us the power. And whenever objects of misery shall present themselves before us. We must not defer, when we can do it. We must not refuse, if we have ability. Our hearts are constantly to be disposed to imitate the blessed God, who is continually blessing both the wicked and the just.

Yet notice,

4. The preference appointed

"Especially to those who are of the household of faith." These have a two-fold claim upon us. That of humanity, in common with all men, and that arising from their union to Jesus, the elder brother, and their connection with all the fraternity of believers. These are the Lord's favorites, our fellow-travellers, and are to be our companions forever. These must have the first and largest shares of our bounty, and these are to be the objects of our unfeigned love and complacent delight.

Let us,

II. *Enforce the Duty in the Text.*

1. The commands of God require it.

"Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself," &c. A command insisted upon in every possible variety of way, in the oracles of truth. Psalm xxxvii. 3. 1 Tim. vi. 18.

2. Our resemblance to God requires it.

If we are his spiritual offspring, then we must be followers of God as dear children. God is good, and doeth good to all; and unless we possess his spirit, we are none of his.

3. The example of Christ requires it.

"He went about doing good." His whole life and mission were to do good. For this he left heaven, was born, and lived, and died. "And he hath left us an

example," &c. If we are his true disciples we shall "follow him."

4. The Spirit of God within us requires it.

The fruit of the Spirit is "love, goodness," &c. Gal. v. 22. It is the Spirit's work to lead us into all goodness, &c.

5. Our own happiness requires it.

"It is more blessed to give than receive." Yes, there is the essence of bliss, the most ecstatic pleasure, enjoyed in doing good. It enlarges the mind, expands the heart, elevates to the most heavenly dignities and enjoyments.

6. Our acquittal at the last day requires it.

See Matt. xxv. 34, to end.

APPLICATION.

1. Does not the subject condemn most of the professed disciples of Christ? How few have their hearts set upon doing good! How few do all the good they can!

2. Let it lead us to a closer acquaintance with the Lord's will, and provoke us to love and good works.

3. A religion without goodness is not of God, and shall not receive a reward at the last day.

SKETCH CLXXIII.

HEAVENLY KNOWLEDGE.

"Then shall I know even as also I am known."—1 *Cor.* xiii. 12.

HEAVEN is invariably represented as the blessed region of light and knowledge. There is no mental darkness, nor spiritual night. It is one region of glory, one world of unending day. "For there is no night there." The apostle is contrasting the imperfections of the present with the future state. And while here every thing is seen as through a glass darkly, there, every thing will be clear and manifest. We shall there see face to face, and "know even as also we are known."

Let us notice,

I *Some things connected with heavenly Knowledge.*

1. In heaven we shall have perfect light.

Now all things are obscure. Neither light nor dark. The twilight of our being. Then it will be meridian day noontide splendor, &c.

2. In heaven we shall have perfect faculties.

Now in an enfeebled state. Frail at best. Connected with a body that clogs, and bears them down towards the earth. There they will be possessed of healthy vigor and power. That which is imperfect will then be done away.

3. In heaven we shall have perfect facilities.

No interruptions, no night, no darkness. Have glorious celestial instructors. Knowledge will not then be conveyed by painful research and study, but by intuition. Dwell in the midst of vision which will supply all our faculties, and fully illuminate our minds.

Let us,

II. *Glance at some of the Subjects of heavenly Knowledge.*

In heaven we shall have a more clear and full knowledge,

1. Of the blessed God.

Now the believer knows him, but very imperfectly. Then he shall "behold his glory." "Behold his face in righteousness." The pure in heart shall "see God." Live in his immediate presence and worship incessantly before him.

2. Of the glory of the Redeemer.

Then we "shall see Jesus as he is." It is his own prayer that his disciples "may behold his glory." Then we shall apprehend more fully of the glories of his nature, perfections, &c. "There we shall see his face," &c.

3. Of the works of creation.

Now we see enough to exclaim, "How marvellous are thy works!" &c. Now fresh wonders burst upon us, through the medium of the telescope, microscope, &c. Then, most likely, we shall become acquainted with the works of the universe in all their extent, variety, and glory.

4. Of the mysteries of providence.

What we "know not now, we shall know hereafter." Then the divine procedure will be vindicated, and the righteous character of God justified; while his wisdom, power, and goodness will be emblazoned before angels and men.

5. Of the wonders of redemption.

Better able to estimate the worth and dignity of Jesus. Better able to prize his precious blood. Better able to understand

he evil of sin. Better able to contemplate the depths of hell from which we have been rescued. Better able to know the heights of glory and happiness to which we have been exalted. Know more and more, though never in all its extent, "the love of Christ which passeth knowledge."

6. Of the family of the glorified.

There we shall become acquainted with the first of our race, the father of mankind, and the mother of all living. There we shall know patriarchs, priests, prophets, apostles, martyrs, confessors, &c. There, also, we shall become intimate with angels, seraphim, cherubim, &c., &c.

"O what a glorious company
Where saints and angels join," &c.

APPLICATION.

1. The subject should make us humble. How little and worthless is our present character! How short-sighted! How ignorant at best! The dust is our place. How foolish is pride, especially pride of intellect!

2. It should make us diligent. Let us thirst after knowledge. Labor for it. Dig for it. Seek it earnestly of God, &c.

3. Excite us to long for heaven. What a blessed world! What light, what glory will burst upon us there! Let us see to it, that our title is clear, and our meetness for it increasing every day.

SKETCH CLXXIV.

CHRISTIAN CONSTANCY

"Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord."—1 *Cor.* xv. 58.

THE subject of this sublime chapter is the resurrection of believers to eternal life. The apostle endeavors to prove its certainty, and to exhibit its glory. And having done this, he practically applies the subject, "Therefore, my beloved brethren," &c.

Let us notice,

I. *The Characters addressed.*

'Beloved brethren." Now this description of believers is exceedingly interesting and appropriate.

Notice,

1. The fraternal character of believers

They are "brethren." Possess oneness of nature. Partakers of the same spiritual and renewed nature. Have the same heavenly Father, whose image they bear, and by whose regenerating influence they have been born again, &c. Now this holy brotherhood embraces all the children of God, of every name, and in every part of the world. All believers are brethren.

Mark,

2. The affectionate character of believers.

They are "beloved" brethren. Such are the beloved of the Father, the beloved of the Son, the beloved of the Spirit, the beloved of angels, and the beloved of each other. This is the cement which unites them together, &c.

Observe,

II. *The specified Course recommended.*

1. Steadfastness.

"Be ye steadfast" signifies to be well grounded in our religion. Well built upon the true foundation. Col. i. 23; ii. 7; Jude 22.

(1) Steadfastly maintain Christian truth. "Let the word of Christ dwell in you," &c "Buy the truth, and sell it not." "Walk in truth." "Contend earnestly for the faith."

(2) Steadfastly exhibit a Christian profession. Never swerve from a public testifying of your attachment to Christ. Never evade the cross. Not be ashamed to own Jesus, and confess him before men.

(3) Steadfastly perform the duties of practical godliness. Public, domestic, private. Towards God, towards the church, towards the world. "Walk in God's statutes and ordinances to do them."

2. Immoveableness.

"Unmoveable." The term signifies perseverance in a course of steadfastness. Continued stability. Abiding firmness. Now we must not be moved,

(1) By the fear of man.

(2) By the wiles and attacks of the devil.

(3) By the allurements of the world.

(4) Or through the sorrows and sufferings of the Christian's calling.

3. Abundant labor.

"Always abounding in the work of the Lord." Work of the Lord includes all the duties of life, but here it may specially signify, work connected with his kingdom

and glory The work of diffusing his knowledge, extending his Gospel, and promoting his cause. Now we are to "abound" in this work. To be *diligently*, *fully*, *constantly*, and *zealously* employed. We must do this by prayer, by example, by our influence, &c.

Notice,

III. *The powerful Motive assigned.*

"Forasmuch as ye know that your labor," &c.

1. Our labor shall not be "in vain."

It may not prosper as we may wish it. To the extent we desire it. At the time we expect it. But our labor shall not be in vain,

(1) With respect to God. Who will not overlook it or despise it.

(2) With respect to others. It shall be of use either in tending to convince them, or rendering them without excuse.

(3) With respect to ourselves. Our labor shall produce spiritual profit in our own souls, and ensure a recompense at the resurrection of the just. "Let us not be weary," &c.

2. We "know" that our labor shall not be in vain.

This is not a matter of doubt or peradventure; the very nature of our religion renders it certain; "godliness is profitable," &c. The word of the Lord ensures it. Our own past experience clearly establishes it.

3. Our labor shall not be in vain "in the Lord."

"In him," we only can be fruitful. His grace must give us ability. His glory must be our constant aim, and chief end. And our reward will be given to us as "heirs with Christ:" if we suffer and labor with Christ, we shall also be glorified together.

APPLICATION

1. What a stimulus to Christian duty and diligence!

2. The work of the sinner will be productive of fearful consequences in the world to come. "They that sow to the flesh," &c. "They that have done evil shall come forth," &c.

SKETCH CLXXV.

FOLLOWING PEACE

"Follow peace with all men."—*Heb* xii. 14.

The religion of Jesus is emphatically a religion of love and peace. Its spirit is beautifully expressed in the song of the angels, "Glory to God in the highest, and peace on earth, and good will towards men." The exhortation, therefore, in the text, is one quite in accordance with the essential principles of genuine Christianity

I. *Let us define the Duty specified.*

"Follow peace."

It includes,

1. The cultivation of a peaceable disposition and state of mind.

The natural state of the heart is angry contentious, bitter, &c. Now this must be rooted out, these must be crucified, &c. And the love, and meekness, and gentleness of the new man cultivated and cherished.

It includes,

2. A cordial desire to promote peace among our fellow-men.

Our motto must be, "We are for peace." Imitate Moses, who tried to heal the breach between two Israelites.

Then to follow peace is,

3. To make this a principal object of our attention.

Study for peace, speak for peace, labor for peace, make sacrifices for peace. Be diligent and prompt in trying to effect it. Seek peace, and pursue it.

Then, observe,

4. The extent of this duty.

"With all men." In the domestic circle. In the church of Christ. And with the enemies of the cross. As far as lieth in your power, "live peaceably with all men."

Notice,

II. *The Means necessary to be adopted in following Peace.*

1. Be deeply impressed with its importance.

It is of the greatest possible importance to yourselves, to your fellow men, to the cause of Christ.

2. Set Christ's example continually before you.

Never forget his dove-like spirit O think upon his meekness, his long-suffer

ing, his forbearance, &c. "Let that mind be also in you," &c.

3. Pray for the hallowing influences of the Spirit of peace.

It is the province of the Spirit to produce fruits of goodness, &c. He will form a serene and holy atmosphere, which will produce the happiest effects upon our minds.

4. Always act according to the word of the God of peace.

Our duty is not hypothetical, it is clearly and fully revealed. We are taught how to act towards our foes, and how to deal with offending brethren. Now the divine rule must be carefully and implicitly followed

III. *The Motives by which this Duty may be Enforced.*

By following peace,

1. We shall resemble the blessed Deity.

He is "the very God of peace." His Spirit is the Spirit of peace. Christ is the prince of peace. His word, the word of peace. His kingdom, the kingdom of peace.

2. We shall greatly advance and recommend the Gospel.

Gainsayers will be silenced. The world will be constrained to say, "See how those Christians live; how they love one another." Inquirers will be encouraged and comforted.

3. We shall be blessings to the church.

And without this, our prayers, our gifts, our influence, our money, will only be the bane of the church. Peace is essential to its prosperity.

4. We shall be interested in the especial promises of God.

"Blessed are the peace-makers," &c. All things shall be at peace with us, &c. "And the very God of peace shall be with you," &c. 2 Cor. xiii. 11.

5. We shall thus obtain an essential qualification for heaven.

Heaven is the region of eternal undisturbed peace. And we must have this congenial feeling before heaven can possibly be enjoyed.

APPLICATION.

1 Press this duty on the conscientious practice of the believer.

2. Urge the sinner to be at peace with God, by repentance and faith in Christ

SKETCH CLXXVI.

WISDOM FROM ABOVE.

"But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy."—*James* iii. 17.

THE text, under the representation of wisdom, gives us a beautiful exhibition of true religion—genuine piety

Let us consider,

I. *The essential Characteristic of genuine Religion.*

II. *Its heavenly Origin.*

And,

III. *Its distinguished Attributes.*

I. *The essential Characteristic of genuine Religion.*

"The wisdom." Wisdom signifies the right application of knowledge. The power of judging rightly. Now true religion may be denominated wisdom,

1. As it directs the mind to the most glorious pursuits.

It rises above every thing mean and grovelling, every thing earthly, and teaches and directs the soul to God as the chief good, to the attainment of his favor, image, and eternal glory. It is wisdom. Col. iii. 10. 2 Cor. iii. 18.

2. As it employs the most efficient means for the attainment of these objects.

The means appointed by God. The means revealed in the infallible word. The only means to secure eternal life. These means it heartily approves of, earnestly adopts, vigorously uses, and perseveringly employs.

Notice,

II. *Its heavenly Origin.*

It is "wisdom from above." "Every good and perfect gift," &c. "All our blessings are from on high."

1. The contrivance of salvation was from above.

It was devised, arranged, and prepared there.

2. The Author of our salvation came from above.

He was with the Father. Was as one brought up with him. Was thus seen by Isaiah, vi. 1, &c. He came from heaven, &c.

3. The revelation of true religion is from above.

The Holy Ghost descended upon the prophets &c. They wrote as they were

influenced by inspiration from above. The Scriptures are, therefore, the law of God's mouth.

4. All the blessings of our religion are from above.

Illumination, pardon, peace, holiness, joy, &c. All these are of God, and from heaven. Religion is emphatically from above. Observe,

III. *Its distinguished attributes.*

Religion is spiritual in its nature, and in its essence cannot be seen. But we may discern its effects, observe the influence it exercises. Now observe,

1. It is pure.

Not absolute, or angelic purity, but spiritual purity. The opposite of depravity and corruption. The implantation of holy principles. The consecration of the soul and body to the service of God. This purity is supernatural, real, and progressive.

2. It is peaceable.

Not contentious. Not boisterous. Not a religion of bickering and strife. It commences with the pacification of the conscience towards God. It produces a peaceful state of mind. It influences the tongue, the tempers, and the actions of the life to peace. "Blessed are the peace-makers," &c.

3. It is gentle.

That is, soft, mild, and tender. Hence the Christian resembles the dove, and not the vulture; the lamb, and not the lion.

4. Is easy to be entreated.

Is not stubborn or self-willed. Not implacable. Does not cherish resentment. But easily forgives offences, &c. Sacrifices self, for the good of others

5. It is full of mercy.

Possesses bowels of mercy. Weeps over the woes and miseries of mankind. Extends its compassionate aids to all it can embrace. "Blessed are the merciful."

6. Full of good fruits.

Fruits of beneficence and liberality. Fruits of generosity, &c. Acts with noble liberality. "Casts its bread upon the waters," &c. "Feels it more blessed to give," &c.

7. Without partiality.

Not preferring men according to the flesh. Not respecting persons because rich, &c.

8 Without hypocrisy.

A perfect agreement between lip and heart; between profession and life. 2 Cor. i. 12. Acts so always as before God. "Conscience void of offence," &c. A single eye to the divine glory.

APPLICATION.

1. How important that we ascertain if our religion possesses these essential attributes!

2. How happy those who experience in their hearts these heavenly fruits!

3. What a blessing is genuine religion to the world at large!

SKETCH CLXXVII.

ANGELIC STUDENTS.

"Which things the angels desire to look into"—1 *Pet.* i. 12

THE salvation to be effected by Christ was an event so truly great and momentous, that it occupied the thoughts of holy men for thousands of years before it was accomplished. The apostle says the prophets diligently searched, as to the time the Spirit testified of, when he revealed the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. And the same theme that occupied the attention of prophets and holy men, also engages the contemplations of angels: "Which things the angels desire to look into."

Let us consider,

I. *The Subject.* And,

II. *The Manner and Motives, of angelic Contemplation.*

I. *The Subject of angelic Contemplation*

Now this subject comprehended two things:

1. The sufferings of Christ.

And in the sufferings of Jesus, what an extensive and mysterious field of meditation was placed before them!

(1) With the person of the sufferer. Angels had never beheld a person like unto the Son of God. They were acquainted with men, and they worshipped God; but in Christ they beheld the essential Deity, enshrined in real humanity. God incarnate. God manifest in the flesh. The Father of eternity, united, and truly one with the child born. Then they would be astonished.

(2) With the sufferings he endured.

(*a*) That *innocency*, yea, essential goodness and holiness, should suffer. Fallen angels and fallen men might justly suffer, but here was immaculate purity suffering.

(*b*) At the *sources* of his suffering. Not only did he suffer from devils, whom he came to spoil and overpower, but from the men whom he came to redeem and save. Yea, more, from his heavenly Father, whose well-beloved Son and eternal delight he was. How they would marvel when they beheld the Father smiting the man that was his fellow.

(*c*) At the *intensity* of his sufferings. All other sufferings they had beheld were but as drops, but the billows went over his sacred head, &c.

(*d*) At the *objects* for whom he so suffered. Worthless, totally undeserving objects. Ungodly, polluted, &c.

Then the subject of angelic study embraced also,

2. The glory which should follow.

Christ possessed eternal and universal glory before he suffered. "He was rich," &c. But he was to have peculiar glory, as the reward of his mediatorial undertaking. He was to prolong his days. See his seed. Extend his kingdom. Have unbounded empire. Be blessed from the rising to the setting sun. Trample on the necks of all his enemies. And receive the acclamations of the redeemed forever and ever. Now there is a connection between the sufferings of Christ and this glory. The one is the basis of the other. His mediatorial glory was obtained by his mediatorial sufferings.

Observe,

II. *The Manner of angelic Contemplation.*

Doubtless this was beautifully represented by the cherubim placed at the end of the ark, and seemed intently gazing into it, as if anxious to be acquainted with its secret contents.

The angels desire to be acquainted with these things,

1. With especial interest and attention.

Not satisfied with a transient glance. But bring all their powers to bear upon it. Labor to fathom the profound depths. Not idle gazers, but diligent students.

2. With humility and reverence

We often speak of the greatness of angels, but they are as lowly as they are exalted. How they hallow the name of Deity! Worship with deepest awe, &c. Never forget their proper place, &c.

3. With wonder and delight.

Here are fresh displays of the glories of Deity. Fresh exhibitions of his illustrious perfections. And these are exhibitions and displays of mercy and goodness, and therefore particularly gratifying to the loving and benevolent angels.

Let us then consider,

III. *The Motives by which we may presume them to be influenced.*

1. Angels are intelligent beings, and here they have fresh accessions of knowledge.

> "The highest seraph never saw
> So much of God before."

As they witnessed the unfolding of the stupendous mystery,

> "They wondered how and where at length,
> The mystic scene would end."

2. Angels are holy beings, and these things are connected with the interests of truth and purity.

Yes, the work of redemption is a work of holiness. A display of the holiness of God. A plan for the renovation of an unholy world.

3. Angels are benevolent beings, and therefore delight in the exercises of mercy.

How delighted then must they be, to witness the execution of a plan, that stamps sin with all that is evil, and saves its victims from its present and eternal consequences. "Joy in heaven," &c.

4. Angels are concerned for the honor of Deity, and here his glory is peculiarly displayed.

> "Here the whole Deity is known," &c

5. Angels are necessarily concerned for their own happiness, and that is greatly enhanced by the salvation of sinners.

New sources of happiness are opened to them. New songs of joy celebrated. New associates in bliss. New compact with Jesus and his redeemed church, &c.

APPLICATION.

Learn,

1. The pre-eminent claim the work of redemption has upon our study and meditation.

2. We are vastly more concerned in these things than the angels.

3. Let us be oftener found imitating these heavenly models, and anticipate the period when we shall join in their holy services, before the throne of God forever.

4. This can only be realized by a personal interest in the work of the Saviour.

SKETCH CLXXVIII.

THE PALE HORSE.

"And I looked, and behold a pale horse, and his name that sat on him was Death, and Hell followed with him."—*Rev.* vi. 8.

In this chapter we have a description of four horses with their respective riders. The first was white, on which sat an illustrious personage, with a bow, and he went forth from conquering to conquer. The second horse is red, to represent war. The third black, to represent famine: and then comes the fourth, a pale horse, whose rider is Death, and Hell followed him.

Let us consider,

I. *The figurative Description here given of Death.*

1. Death is under a seal, ver. 7.

"When he had opened the seal," &c. Death is not under the direction and power of Satan, but under the management of God. God is the author, proprietor, and disposer of Life. Deut. xxxiii. 39; Dan. v. 25; Psal. ciii. 4.

2. Death is represented as riding.

Not as creeping, or walking, but riding forth with courage and power. Trampling as a war-horse all beneath his feet. See Job xxxix. 19, &c. He has ridden over the heads of all classes and generations of human beings.

3. Death is described as a pale horse.

This may denote the general appearance of mortality. "Thou changest his countenance, and sendest him away." Job xiv. 20. How affecting the alterations of death upon the person of man! Abraham requested a burying-place, &c.

4. Death is described as being followed with Hell.

This word sometimes signifies the *grave*, and death throws its victims into the cold *loathsome* grave. It signifies sometimes the *invisible state*, and death hurries men into the dark unknown world. It also signifies the place of *future punishment* and death consigns the wicked to the misery of the second death. "The rich man died," &c.

Notice,

II. *Our Duty respecting it.*

"I heard the voice say, Come and see,' &c.

1. Come and see the antiquity of death.

Go and look to the world's origin, and see how soon he commenced his career, &c. Behold Abel prostrate, &c.

2. Come and see the extent of its devastations.

No country, or color, or people, ever yet escaped his ravages. Wherever man is, there death is also. All classes, degrees, &c. fall before him. The living know that they must die, &c. "It is appointed unto men," &c.

3. Come and see this spoiler foiled and conquered.

Jesus in our nature entered the field of combat; for a time death prevails; but at length, Christ arises with power, &c. His sting is withdrawn. The Saviour, standing on the neck of his foe, exclaims, "I am he that was dead," &c. "O death, I have been thy destruction," &c.

4. Come and see how death may safely be encountered.

Repentance—faith in Jesus, who hath abolished death—a title for heaven, by justifying grace—a new nature—and holiness of life, without which no man can see the Lord.

APPLICATION.

Let the subject be further impressed, by visiting the habitations of the dying.

1. Go to the death-bed of the *Infidel*, and see the anxiety, the dread, the despair which surround it.

2. Go to the death-bed of the *Profligate*, hardened, stupified, callous, dying like a beast.

3. Go to the death-bed of the *Worldling*, his heart set upon wealth, clinging to the earth, as one exclaimed, "A kingdom for an hour!"

4 Go to the death-bed of the *Formalist* ever near Christ, *but not* in him. By the way side, &c., still without No oil, &c Opportunities gone, &c. "The harvest is past," &c.

5 Go to the death-bed of the *Christian*

How bright and radiant is the scene! The very antechamber of heaven! "I am now ready to depart. O death," said one, "I do not fear thee." "O death, where is thy sting?" &c. And what do you feel respecting your own mortality? Is it not, "Let me die the death of the righteous," &c. Then now be made righteous, live righteously, and your last end shall be like his.

SKETCH CLXXIX.

THE THRONE OF GRACE.

"Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need."—*Heb.* iv. 16.

THE apostle had been treating on the priesthood of Christ, and had been referring to his greatness, his exalted station, and his sympathy towards his people; then he introduces the text, and from these considerations, he urges the duty of "coming boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy," &c.

Let us notice,

I. *The Magnificent Object to which our Attention is Directed.*

"The throne of grace."

A throne is the seat of royalty. This is the seat of the true and only Potentate, &c. It was obviously typified by the ancient Mercy-seat, which was the covering of the ark of the covenant; at each end of which was a cherub, and between them the Shekinah, or symbol of the divine glory. To this, the great high-priest approached, once a-year, with the blood of the annual sacrifice, as a propitiatory sacrifice to Deity. Now God through the sacrifice of his Son is propitiated on behalf of a guilty world, and is seated on a throne of grace, or favor towards us, and to this throne our text invites us to come. God through the merit of his Son, and the shedding of his precious blood, now waits to impart unto men through that medium, all the blessings which that sacrifice has obtained for us. And Deity can be approached only through the one Mediator between himself and us, the Man Christ Jesus.

Notice,

II. *The Manner of Approach specified.*

"Let us come boldly," &c

It does not mean with ignorant presumption — irreverently — self-confidently, &c But it signifies,

1. With liberty of access.

Need not approach with dread, &c We come by divine authority and permission. It is not intrusion, &c.

2. With freedom of speech.

Need not be overawed by the greatness of the Being we address. Jesus is upon the throne with the Father, and he is our Brother, &c. See ver. 15. We may freely and fully state our case, and make known our need. We may ask freely, &c.

3. With assurance of success.

Need not fear a repulse. Expect a gracious reception. Full assurance of faith.

4. With frequency of application.

Original Mercy-seat could only be approached annually. Earthly monarchs can only be approached at set periods. To this we may come daily, yea, it is approachable every moment.

5. We must come just as we are.

No ceremony is required. No peculiar costume. No fitness, &c. But approach, as needy, helpless sinners, &c. Now we may thus come boldly, because,

(1) This is the way expressly laid down. Hence we have God's warrant, yea, his command.

(2) Because all ancient saints came in this way. Jacob—Moses—Elijah—Woman of Canaan, &c. &c.

(3) God's great goodness and graciousness should induce us thus to come; and,

(4) The intercession of Christ for us, and the Spirit within us, should encourage us thus to draw near.

Then observe,

III. *The great Ends to be kept in View in coming to the Throne of Grace.*

1. That we may obtain mercy.

(1) Mercy to pardon our guilt. "If we say that we have no sin," &c.

(2) Sparing mercy. If God should mark iniquity, &c. "O spare me," &c.

(3) Daily mercy. At all times need mercy—living—dying. And at the last day, "The Lord grant that we may find mercy," &c.

2. To find grace to help in time of need

Grace includes all the blessings of the divine favor—All we need for body, soul time, and eternity. Grace to "help" us,

(1) To pray and serve God.

(2) To labor in his cause.

(3) To suffer for his sake.

(4) And to triumph over our foes. Grace to help in "every time of need." Prosperity—adversity—sickness—death—yea, every instant is a time of need.

APPLICATION.

1. Learn to what we come in prayer.
2. How we should come. And,
3. What we should seek—mercy, &c.

SKETCH CLXXX.

THE KNOWLEDGE OF CHRIST

"Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus, my Lord."—*Phil.* iii. 8.

THE apostle Paul had one theme, one subject, one cause. That theme was Christ; that subject, the cross; that cause, the cause of salvation. His various epistles are full of these, the topics of his ministry were these, the end of all he wished, and labored to promote, were these. Hence he said, addressing the Corinthians, "We preach Christ crucified," &c. And again, "We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord," &c. To the Galatians, he said, "God forbid that I should glory," &c. To the Philippians, "Yea doubtless," &c.

Let us consider,

I. *The Knowledge specified.*

Now this is the knowledge "of Christ Jesus our Lord." This knowledge includes,

1. A scriptural conception of Christ's person and work.

Now these seem to be epitomized in the text. A knowledge of the Redeemer.

(1) As Jesus. The Saviour. The name to which the types and sacrifices especially referred. The name given by the angels. The name by which he is to be preached, &c. The name which contains the music of salvation's sound. Then he is presented to us,

(2) As Christ. The Saviour selected—appointed—sent—and anointed expressly for this great work. "The elect of God," &c. He had upon him the great seal of divinity.

(3) As Lord. Jesus is both Lord and Christ, King, as well as Priest. Lord of heaven. Lord of glory. Lord of angels. Lord of all. Not only Lord officially, but essentially. Truly divine. Co-equal with the Father. "Thy throne, O God," &c.

The knowledge of Christ includes

2. An experimental acquaintance with Christ's work.

To know him in the efficacy of his saving character. In his power to deliver. In his gracious ability to save. To be able to attest from happy experience, that he has "loved us and given himself for us."

3. An intellectual consecration of ourselves to Christ.

To know him as "our Lord." To feel and acknowledge his claims to rule over us. To feel that we are not our own, but Christ's. That we should not live unto ourselves, &c. To be his cheerful, willing, obedient subjects. To serve the Lord Christ. Observe,

II. *The Excellency of this Knowledge.*

All knowledge is excellent. It is the food of the mind. The dignity of the soul. Confers true greatness, &c. But the knowledge of Christ is the "excellency" of all knowledge. The light of a lamp is valuable, the light of the moon more so; but the light of the sun is the excellency of all light. Now the excellency of this knowledge arises,

1. From the divinity of its origin.

It is immediately from God. The revelation is from God. The gospel is light from the throne of the Eternal. This experimental knowledge is produced in us by divine influence. No man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost, &c. "God, who commanded the light," &c.

2. The dignity of its object.

The knowledge of "Christ." And who can set him forth? Who describe his infinite glories? Who explain his illustrious titles? Who comprehend the immensity of his works? The knowledge of Christ is the only clear and explicit knowledge we have of God. "No man hath seen God," &c. "Whoso hath seen the Son," &c He and the Father are one

3. From its influence on the heart and character of man.

It illumines the understanding. Emancipates the soul. Transforms into the divine likeness. Produces peace and joy, and a hope of eternal blessedness. It is eminently saving knowledge. "This is life eternal, to know," &c.

Then notice,

III *The Estimation in which it was held by the Apostle.*

"Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss," &c.

The apostle's estimation was,

1. Personal.

"I" count, &c. The conclusion of his own judgment. The decision of his own heart. Religion is experimental.

2. It was intellectual.

He says, I "count." That is, I have examined the matter carefully — I have made it my study. I have tested it. Brought it to every ordeal. And now as a reasonable man, as a Hebrew student, and as an inspired apostle, "I count," &c.

3. It was supreme—pre-eminent.

All things but loss." His learning. His former religion. His worldly prospects. His ease. His friends. His liberty, yea, and if necessary too, his life. "I am now ready to be offered up," &c. See Acts xxi. 13. And can such attachment to the knowledge of Christ be justified? Yes, a dying hour, and the day of judgment, will show the propriety, the wisdom of such a preference. The mariner throws over all his goods to save the vessel; yea, deserts the vessel itself, to save his life! "What shall it profit," &c.

APPLICATION.

1. Have you this knowledge? If not, seek it. You cannot be wise, or happy, or safe, without it.

2. If you possess it, cultivate it. Grow in knowledge, &c.

3. Diffuse it. By the brightness of your example, and by extending the gospel, until all flesh shall see the salvation of God.

SKETCH CLXXXI.

THE LOVE OF GOD TO MAN.

"But God commendeth his love towards us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more, then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him."—*Rom.* v. 8, 9.

Our text is essentially connected with the verse preceding. And the whole paragraph is designed to exhibit to us the marvellous love of God to man, as displayed in our redemption by the gift of Jesus Christ. There have been striking instances of love triumphing over every other feeling. But in all these exhibitions of wonderful affection, it has usually been affection for friends.

Damon became security for Pythias, who was condemned to die, and would cheerfully have died in his stead. A number of citizens of Calais offered to redeem the city, by being put to death, to appease the wrath of the monarch who had besieged it. There is an account of the remains of a shipwrecked crew, who found it necessary that some of them should be thrown into the sea, that the rest might not perish through want of provisions: and when a younger brother offered to die instead of an elder one, who had a family depending upon him. Now, the apostle observes, "For a righteous man scarcely will one die." No such case is recorded. For a good man, a benevolent man—some, from love to such, would die. This has been the case. But never was it recorded that any ever died for a profligate, a criminal, a worthless character. Here, then the love of God transcends all human conception,

"In that while," &c. Mark,

I. *The Objects of the Divine Love*—

"Towards us."

We do not wonder that God should love the angels—wise, holy, benevolent, &c.; or, that he should love our first parents—the creatures of his power and goodness, and bearing his image. But he loved sinners.

1. Sinners who had apostatized.

Abandoned his service; violated his law; united with the rebel angels, &c.

2. Sinners in actual hostility to him.

Not reconsidering—not repenting sinners; anxious to return to him; but persisting in sin; in open arms against him; all the heart and life opposed to him.

3. Sinners who had greatly incurred his wrath.

Guilty, self-condemned delinquents; beneath the curse. In whose destruction, justice, truth, and holiness would have been magnified.

4. Sinners without plea, and without any thing to entitle them to mercy.

Sinners who had sinned knowingly, freely, when there was every motive, and full power, to have remained obedient, safe, and happy. Yet, these were the objects of God's mercy and compassion. Notice

II. *The Manifestation of this Love.*

"God commendeth his love," &c Now, here notice,

1. The person through whom he displayed this love.

Christ the anointed; his own and only-begotten son; the object of his transcendent delight; his holy fellow; his divine equal. But Christ in our nature; God in the tabernacle of our flesh. It behooved him to be our kinsman, that he might consistently be our surety and redeemer.

2. The act in which this love was especially exhibited.

"Died for us." Every thing Christ did and suffered was for us. He was born for us. "Unto you is born," &c. He was poor us. "Ye know," &c. He lived for us, and "left us an example," &c.; but above all he died, and died for us. Prophets had lived and died to glorify God, and promote the good of mankind;—Moses, John the Baptist. But it is never said of any other that he died for us. Jesus did not die as a martyr, or example—he died instead of us. We were condemned to die, and should have died, had not Christ died. "He suffered the just," &c. "He loved us, and gave," &c. "He died for our sins," &c. "He was wounded," &c. "He bore our sins," &c. Now, more than the act of dying is included. The agony of soul in the garden. His horror; his bloody sweat; his desertion by his Father on the cross. He bore the curse, and "became a curse for us."

3. The benefits arising to us from this act.

Now, these may be said to be all included in the word salvation Especially we may notice,

1. Pardon. "In whose blood," &c.

2. Sanctification. "Unto him that loved," &c

3. Eternal life. "By his own blood he entered into the holy," &c.

III. *The happy and conclusive Consequence the Believer may deduce from this Love.*

"Much more, then," &c.

1. Believers are now justified. See ver. 1.

2. They shall be saved from eternal death through Christ.

No condemnation now. Have now eternal life in promise, and in earnest.

3. Their expectation of this rests on a sure and immoveable basis.

They often fear and doubt. But the text is sufficient to remove every fear, &c.

(1) God loved them while unregenerate sinners—how much more now they are humble believing children.

(2) God loved them before Christ died for them. Hence, Christ was given. He gave Christ, not that he might, but because he did love them. "But God," &c. How much more then now, when their sin has been atoned for, and they appear as the purchase of Christ's blood.

(3) He loved us when there were formidable difficulties in the way; how much more then, when all have been honorably removed.

(4) He loved so as to give Christ to die when we were enemies; how much more now we are friends, will he give us heaven and eternal life.

APPLICATION.

1. What a foundation of hope for sinners
2. What a ground of joy for believers.
3. What a theme for present exultation and eternal triumph.

SKETCH CLXXXII.

THE DELUGE.

"And every living substance was destroyed which was upon the face of the ground, both man and cattle, and the creeping things, and the fowl of the heaven; and they were destroyed from the earth and Noah only remained alive, and they that were with him in the ark"—*Gen.* vii. 23.

THE history of the old world is confined to about seven chapters. This includes the account of the creation, of the fall, and of the state of things for nearly 2000 years. During this period, sin had dispersed its deadly streams in every direction. Here, then, we meet with a pious, decided character; but the great mass had not the fear of God, and were disobedient to the authority of heaven. At length, even the forbearance of God was exhausted; his long-suffering expired; and he said, "My spirit shall not always strive with man." Then the last warning was given by the preaching of Noah, and the erection of the ark, which lasted for 120 years. Then was the threatening of heaven executed and all flesh, save Noah and his family perished before him.

Let us notice,

I. *The Deluge itself.*

II. *The procuring Cause.*

III. *The Deliverance of Noah and his Family.*

I. *The Deluge itself.* Consider,

1. Its reality.

Those who admit the truth of revelation, do not hold the shadow of a doubt as to the reality of the deluge—not only detailed as matter of history in this book, but as also referred to in several passages in the New Testament. Christ refers to it, Matt. xxiv. 37; 2 Pet. ii. 5, &c. It rests also on the traditions of all nations. Scarcely a people who have not some tradition as to the deluge. The Persians, Egyptians, Chinese, and the Americans. Also, Sir W. Jones discovered that in the oldest books of Indian mythology, there are many records quite resembling the account given by Moses. There are also the natural evidences. It would be impossible for such an event to take place without the earth bearing the abiding evidences of it. Now, do these exist? I just reply,

(1) The loftiest mountains, at the greatest distance from the sea, abound with the remains of various tribes of sea-fish. Marine shells are found imbedded in the soil of mountains 13, or 14,000 feet above the level of the sea.

(2) That the external crust of the earth has been broken is obvious, from vegetable and animal fossils which have been discovered in all depths of the earth that have been examined.

(3) The bones of animals, which could only have existed in hot countries, have been dug out of the earth in great variety, in the coldest regions. Now, I just leave these three kinds of evidence, to support the reality of a deluge having taken place.

2. Consider the means by which it was effected.

None who believe in a Supreme almighty power, will dispute God's ability to produce a deluge. The opinions of those who have studied natural philosophy, greatly vary. Some suppose it was effected by a comet; others, that by one entire revolution of the earth, the sea was moved out of its place, and covered the face of the earth; and that the bed of the ancient sea became our new earth. There is one simple means by which it might have been easily effected. Water is composed of two gases or airs, oxygen and hydrogen—eighty-five parts of oxygen, and fifteen hydrogen. An electric spark passing through decomposes them, and converts them into water. So that God, by the power of lightning, could change the whole atmosphere into water, and thus the resources of the flood are at once provided. But read carefully the account given by Moses, chap. vii. 11, &c.

3. Consider its universality extended to the whole earth.

All mankind—all animals, except such as live in the waters. We have heard of destructive floods and inundations desolating districts of countries; but this swept over the face of the wide world; involved all in one common ruin.

4. Consider its terrific character.

Men may suffer great calamities by land or sea, through the appointments of the providence of God. Good men have often thus suffered; but this was the effect of divine indignation; the wrath of God. Here was God justifying his right and authority. The ruler of the universe summoning the elements of nature to punish his rebellious creatures. Scripture records on its pages the fearful calamities God has brought on disobedient persons, and nations—the stoning of Achan—the opening of the earth to swallow up Korah, &c. The smiting the presumptuous sinner with disease and sudden death. The destruction of Pharaoh, and his host. The overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah. The destruction of Jeroboam, &c. But, here a world is arraigned, condemned, and destroyed. A whole race is swept away, except Noah and his family There never was any thing like it, nor ever shall be, except the conflagration of the world by fire at the last day. Notice then,

II. *The Procuring cause of the Deluge.*

1. Universal wickedness.

Chap. vi. 5–11, 12. The mind was totally alienated. Heart filled with evil, and only evil, and that continually. The cup of evil was full; the fruit ripe for destruction. Cause stated, chap. vi. 1, 2. There was,

2. Impious rejection of Divine influences.

Ver. 3. How he did strive is not said, but that he did so, is manifest. It is obvious he strove graciously—desiring to save them; and the term includes energy and perseverance. God strove long.

3. Final impenitency.

After he had taken the survey, seen the guilt, and determined to punish, yet he gave 120 years' space for repentance; and, if there had been a turning from sin, &c., as in Nineveh, doubtless, judgment would have beer averted. But these years of grace were all abused, and most likely despised. Final impenitence must bring destruction. Notice,

III. *The Deliverance of Noah and his Family.*

Now, you will see the reasons why God exempted Noah from destruction. See ver 8. If Noah had been like the rest, he would have perished; but Noah,

(1) Was a godly man. (2) He was a just man. (3) He believed in God, and feared and obeyed him, Heb. xi. 4: and hence, in the day of wrath, God provided for his security, and saved him and his house from destruction.

APPLICATION.

1. Learn how fearful is the wrath of God. See a world deluged—a world destroyed.

2. How dreadful is a state of carnal presumption and security. It is a deadly opiate, destroyer of the soul.

3. The distinctions and rewards which await the righteous. The Lord knoweth, &c. Urge all to repent and flee to Christ, &c.

SKETCH CLXXXIII.

DANIEL.

"Now, when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house, and his windows being open in his chamber, towards Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees, three times a-day, and prayed, and gave thanks before God, as he did aforetime."—*Dan.* vi. 10

Daniel was a prince of the royal line of David. He lived during the Babylonian captivity, and was one of the favorites of Nebuchadnezzar. You will remember that, when Nebuchadnezzar had forgotten the very singular dream, and ordered all the wise men to be slain, Daniel, with the three Hebrews, fervently prayed to God; and he enabled him to recall and interpret the dream. During the time that the king commanded the image to be set up and worshipped, nothing is said concerning Daniel, so that it is probable he might be employed in some remote part of the empire at that time. After this, we see him called again to interpret another of Nebuchadnezzar's dreams, which related to God's judgments upon the king—all which literally came to pass. In the reign of Belshazzar, we see Daniel again called upon to act as an interpreter of dreams This was on the fatal night, when the impious monarch had assembled his princes at the feast, when the vessels of the house of God were profaned, and when the kingdom changed hands, and became subject to Darius the Median. The Medes and Persians having possessed Babylon, Darius appointed an hundred and twenty princes over the Empire, and over these, three presidents, of whom Daniel was the first. See ver. 3.

And now we are brought to notice

I. *Daniel's Trial.*

II. *His Conduct.*

III. *His Deliverance*

I. *Daniel's Trial.*

This is a world of trial; all good men have found it so. Enoch, Noah, Jacob Moses, David, all found it so. It is compared to a wilderness—to the sea, &c.

1. The source of his trial.

Now, this was envy of the presidents and princes of the empire. Daniel had been preferred; and they knew his great superiority over themselves, &c. Saw his elevation, therefore they were filled with envy. This is one of the vilest and blackest principles of the human heart. It is the most virulent poison that can lodge in the soul. Let us just look at a few specimens of it, and its effects, in the Word of God.

(1) It is the leading characteristic in the devil. Hence, from this he tempted and ruined our first parents.

(2) Look at Cain, who was the first human murderer; and wherefore slew he Abel, &c.

(3) Look at the brethren of Joseph, and see how they acted, &c.

(4) Look at Haman, and see its effects upon his happiness, and his horrid design Esther v. 9, &c.

(5) One more case before we come to Daniel, and that is the case of the blessed Jesus. Only think of Christ's excellence—think of his purity, his benevolence, &c

Yet, it is written, for envy they delivered him up, Matt. xxvii. 18. Now, it was the same feeling that moved the princes, &c., to attempt the ruin of Daniel. His wisdom —his integrity—his elevation, all tended to fill their minds with this feeling; and so they resolved, if possible, to effect his death. Notice,

2. The trial itself.

Now, mark, in effecting their purpose, the testimony they were constrained to yield in favor of Daniel, ver. 5. Religion does not dissolve the moral obligations we are under to regard the civil duties of life. See 1 Pet. iv. 14, &c. The trial is described, ver. 6 to 9. Here, then, they attack the rights of his conscience; attempted to sap the foundation of his religion. Well, observe,

II. *Daniel's Conduct.*

Now, let me notice that Daniel soon heard of this decree, and he knew too that it was irreversible. The laws of the Medes and Persians change not. Silly, stupid, wicked laws. Laws must suit the condition, &c., of a people. Even the dispensations of heaven were changed, and one succeeded another. Well, Daniel knew all this; and what did he do? He followed the same course in religion, as he had ever done. What might he have done?

1. Could he not have consulted the law of expediency?

Here is a difficulty—an extreme difficulty; my usual course of action may be dispensed with, I must suit my conduct to the times.

2. Might he not have pleaded gratitude to Darius?

He has been deceived; he is my friend; I owe all my dignity and prosperity to him, and so I ought to bow to the event and be passive for a time.

3. Might he not have pleaded self-preservation?

Life is a talent—a precious talent, &c. God has implanted the love of it deep in my nature, &c., therefore I must preserve it. I have not courage to die. My sin will only be one of weakness. Who can blame me? Would not the great mass do the same?

4. He might have pleaded the easiness of evasion.

They know, that as a Jew, I worship the God of heaven that I worship towards Jerusalem—my window opened, &c.; and kneeling, there I implore the God of Jerusalem's blessing. Well, I can retire to another place; I can worship at midnight I can go to another room; I can close my window; I can pray in the spirit by holy aspirations, &c. How easily, therefore, could he have evaded the royal edict. But mark the course he adopted. He continued to serve God as before—exactly He would not give to Darius the things which belong to God

(1) He followed the dictates of a tender conscience.

(2) He feared God more than men.

(3) He preferred the profession of religion to life. Under these influences he left all in the hands of God, and he went up to his house, not to secrete himself, but to worship. He entered his oratory; he knelt on the accustomed spot; he opened his window; he prayed audibly to God, and gave thanks, as he had ever done, three times a day. Well, what was the result? His enemies were on the watch, they found him praying, &c., ver. 11. Then they appeal to the king, who was distressed at the result, &c., ver. 14. The sentence, however, was executed; but, need I say, that Daniel had on his side the favor of his king, the testimony of a good conscience, and the approbation of his God. And, what was the result? This leads us to consider,

III. *His Deliverance.* See ver. 18–23.

1. His deliverance was divine.

It was a miracle wrought by God; none but God could do it.

2. His deliverance was through the ministry of an angel. Ver. 22.

God has often thus employed angels "He giveth his angels," &c. "The angel of the Lord," &c. Many ancient instances. So also Peter from prison.

3. His deliverance glorified God. Ver. 25, 26.

Glory of God and happiness of his people inseparable.

4. It involved the enemies of Daniel in ruin. Ver. 24.

So will all the enemies of God and his church finally perish.

APPLICATION.

1. We have been contemplating the history of a moral hero. Few men had ever so holy a character as Daniel. He was intellectual, righteous, devotional faithful and persevering. He had to live in diffi

cult times, and under a dangerous state of things; but he was faithful to the last.

2. We have seen the hatred of men against religion. It still exists. It ever will in the hearts of the wicked.

3. We have seen an illustration of one of Christ's sayings: "Whosoever will lose his life for my sake," &c. And, now let the Christian be as decided and self-denying as Daniel. Who will be on the Lord's side? Who will take Christ, his cross, and his crown?

SKETCH CLXXXIV.

SINFUL GLORYING PROHIBITED

"Thus saith the Lord, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches; but let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth, and knoweth me, that I am the Lord which exercise loving-kindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith the Lord."—*Jer.* ix. 23, 24.

Man was formed for the glory of God. Man's happiness was inseparably connected with his answering the end of his creation. God had a place for him to occupy, his well-being depended on his possessing and filling that place to the glory of God. That sphere was one of dignity and honor. "Thou madest him," &c. "Of dominion and power," &c. "Gave him dominion," &c. Yet, of subjection and responsibility. All his powers were to be subordinate to the will of God. His faculties were to reflect the Divine attributes, and all his affections were to centre in the Deity of the universe. Sin threw off the yoke of allegiance, refused obedience, and turned all the powers of the soul into channels of selfishness. Sin causes man to live to himself, and without God in the world. Hence, man pursues selfish things; depends upon self; and glories in self. God, therefore, addresses him in the text, "Thus saith the Lord," &c. Let us consider,

I. *The Course prohibited, and the Reasons on which it is grounded.*

II. *The Course recommended, and the Reasons on which it is grounded.*

I. *The Course prohibited, and the Reasons on which it is grounded.*

To glory, signifies to be proud of, to boast of, &c. Now, three things are specified in the text. We shall consider them in the inverse order in which they appear

1. There is specified riches.

Riches are the object of almost universal pursuit; may be the means of great comfort, and of still greater usefulness. They involve great responsibility, and expose to great peril. Men who possess them are often proud and tyrannical. There is a great danger, also, of loving them, and that is declared to be a foundation of evil and destruction. See 1 Tim. vi. 9, &c. We are referred,

2. To might.

Now, this may include bodily strength. Men are very apt to desire this, and to boast of it. Sampson possessed this to an amazing degree. This was Goliath's boast and glory, 1 Sam. xvii. 10. But might, I presume, rather refers to influence or power, which great minds exert upon society. As great a difference in the minds of men as their bodies. "One star," &c. Only one Moses, one Elijah, one David, one John the Baptist, one Paul. In Germany, only one Luther; in Geneva, one Calvin; in England, one Wickliffe; in Scotland, one Knox. We saw this possessed in an amazing degree by Napoleon. Men are exceedingly anxious to possess this power, the might of influence. We are referred,

3. To wisdom.

Now, this is a much more important distinction than either of the preceding. It is a mental distinction—an intellectual difference. Wisdom is really and invaluably precious; it exalts men higher, and above the brute, and allies him nearer to the angelic. It is connected with art and science, philosophy and commerce. Yet, even here there is danger. Unsanctified wisdom may, and often does, fill with extreme pride, or loathsome vanity. Men may be intellectual demons, and thus resemble closely the fallen Satan, who often appears as an angel of light. Now, having glanced at the course prohibited, let us see the reasons on which it is grounded.

We should not glory in them,

1. Because they are distinctions which we owe to the providence of God.

The riches of the earth are all the Lord's. We are never any thing but stewards. Whatever we may have, it is the Lord's. Money in our possession. We could not have had it without God. He

could have placed us in conditions of abject poverty—blighted all our plans, &c.

So of Might. Instead of corporeal energy, we might have been weak, and maimed from our birth; might have been of the most insignificant class of society.

So Wisdom. Our birth might have been among savages. Or God might have given us the vacant stare of the idiot. All our capacities are from God. We should not glory, &c.

2. Because they cannot secure us from the miseries of life.

There are common ills to which all are heirs alike. They cannot prevent disappointment. Cannot shield us from disease. Cannot comfort us under bereavement. Cannot stay the progress and advances of death.

3. Because of the uncertainty of their continuance.

None of them stable and sure. Riches are uncertain. So called. Might, a paralytic stroke, Or, the might of influence; Haman, Zedekiah, Napoleon. So is Wisdom, a fever, a fall, &c. Dean Swift, the brightest wit that his country ever produced, died a confirmed helpless idiot. A worm at the root of every earthly good.

4. Because none of them can render us acceptable to God.

How important to be accepted of God. The Egyptians were learned, and yet gross idolaters. Pharaoh, and Belshazzar, and Herod, men of riches, &c.; yet, mark their history. God is no respecter of persons. See the rich man and Lazarus.

5. Because they avail us nothing, in the world to which we are hastening.

All distinctions cease. None but a moral difference will be important. Only two classes, The righteous and the wicked, believers and unbelievers, &c. "Let not then the wise man," &c.

II. *The Course recommended, and the Reasons on which it is grounded.*

It is to glory in the true knowledge of God.

1. To know God as the moral governor of the world

Judgeth righteously, &c. To acknowledge him as such. To fear him as such. To obey him, &c.

2. To know God as of unbounded benevolence.

"Who exercises loving-kindness." In nature, providence, grace, bounty, forbearance, mercy, &c. Especially in the gospel of Christ. The church, &c. Now, we should glory in this personal, experimental knowledge of God.

1. Because it is represented as the sum of religion.

We are directed to "know the God of our fathers," &c. "This is life eternal," &c. "Yea, doubtless," &c.

2. Because this is a source of constant felicity to the soul.

"One thing I know," &c. "I know in whom," &c. "I know that my Redeemer liveth," &c. "Rejoice not in this, but rather," &c.

3. Because this will be connected with eternal blessedness.

It is life eternal. This spiritual knowledge will be perfected in glory, and endure forever.

APPLICATION.

1. Avoid false and delusive grounds of glorying.

2. The Christian can rejoice in God always.

3. Let the sinner be admonished. God is righteous and just, and will not spare the guilty.

SKETCH CLXXXV.

JESUS AT NAZARETH.

"And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up; and, as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the Sabbath-day, and stood up for to read."—*Luke* iv. 16, &c.

How delightfully interesting is the history of the Redeemer! Every portion of it is full of instruction, and every incident deserves a place in the memory of the true believer. Several important events are crowded into this chapter. There is Christ leaving Jordan after his baptism, full of the Holy Ghost. Then his fasting and temptation in the wilderness: and after this, his visit to Galilee, and his wonderful teaching. See ver. 15. Then the narrative of his appearance in Nazareth, &c. Observe,

I. *The Place specified in the Text.*

It was Nazareth, where Christ had been brought up. Nazareth was a small town in Galilee, about seventy miles from Jerusalem, a place of no worldly greatness nor celebrity. Here the Virgin-mother resided

when the angel addressed her, "Hail," &c. Observe, too, at Nazareth "he had been brought up." Thence Joseph returned after his flight into Egypt, Matt. ii. 23. When Christ was twelve years of age, and had been disputing with the doctors, it is said, he came to Nazareth, and was subject to Joseph and Mary there, Luke ii. 51. It is obvious Christ still lived there, up to the time of his baptism, when he came from Galilee to Jordan. Observe,

(1) The obscurity of Christ's private life. An unknown resident in the small town of Nazareth. The Son of God, not in the metropolis; not among the rabbies, &c. Not in a palace; but in a poor family, an assistant to his father as a carpenter, until he was about thirty years old. How true that he humbled himself, took the form of a servant, made himself of no reputation, &c. "Ye know the grace of our Lord," &c.

(2) We see in it God's estimation of the world's pomp and glory. Here was indeed a practical lesson of the emptiness and worthlessness of the world's riches and grandeur. Christ was not of this world. He came to save men from the love of its vanities, and wiles, and pleasures.

(3) We see honest industry honored by the Saviour. Jesus did not exclude himself from the useful avocations of life. He who had all majesty labored with his hands, and thus stamped industry with the greatest possible dignity and importance. Let us not forget that it was at Nazareth that Jesus grew in stature, and wisdom, and in favor with God and man. Christ had been absent for a short period, to be invested into his glorious offices and work, and now he returns to Nazareth, &c. Notice,

II. *What Jesus did on his visit to Nazareth.*

"And as his custom was," &c Now, here we have,

1. The place to which he resorted.

"The Synagogue." These were erections for public worship in various parts of Judea, where prayer was presented, and the law of God read to the people. Here, public worship was honored, and stands recommended by the example of Jesus. Many would have been occupied with friends; but the honor and glory of God were ever first and last with Christ. If the heart be right, the sanctuary will have unrivalled charms, and irresistible attractions. "How amiable, &c.

2. This place was identified with former associations.

"And as his custom was." He had frequented it before. Yea, more, it is clear he had been a regular worshipper. As such, it would have many things to interest the pious feelings of the Son of God. Here, doubtless, he had often heard that law which he came to magnify—those prophecies, which he came to fulfil—those promises, of which he was the chief, and the sum. Doubtless, he had often longed here for the period when his mission of mercy should be made known to the people. Well, now qualified and overflowing with love, he came to the place, and as his "custom was." Holy custom! useful custom! happy custom! Many of you can feel, and appreciate too, the truth of these exclamations.

3. The time when Christ went into the synagogue was the sabbath.

The day on which the Lord rested, and the day given as such to our first parents. Enjoined by Moses, and enforced by the prophets. It is impossible too highly to value the sabbath. How true that declaration, "the sabbath was made for man;" that is, for his benefit; for the cleanliness, and rest and comfort of the body; for the improvement of the mind; for the sanctification of the heart; for giving peculiarly favorable seasons for prayer, reading, worship, meditation, and preparing for a sabbatical immortality. Well has it been called the Queen of days. The Christian's Sunday; day of heavenly traffic, and holy merchandise. The type, and the earnest of that rest, which remains for the people of God. Notice,

4. What Jesus did in the synagogue.

"And he stood up for to read." In the Jewish synagogue they had seven readers a priest, a Levite, and five of the congregation. The reader always stood up; so particular were they, that he was not allowed to lean upon any thing during the time of reading. Now, Jesus, therefore honored this institution of reading the Holy Scriptures—an exercise that ever was, and ever will be, important—cannot be too much valued, and too seriously observed, an ornament to good sermons, and a corrective to bad ones. The touchstone of all preaching. "To the law, and to the

estimony." Not a good sign if the reading of the word is not greatly relished. What a majestic, heavenly sight, to see Jesus thus standing up to read the oracles of eternal truth! Observe, then,

5. The portion of the Sacred Scriptures which he read.

There was given to him the roll of Isaiah's prophecy, the part, no doubt, appointed for the day. He therefore unrolled it, till he came to the sixty-first chapter, and then he began to read. Isaiah has been truly called the evangelical prophet. He is so full of Christ, so clear, so rich. Christ honors Isaiah, by taking his first text from his prophecy. How wonderful the contrast between Moses giving the law, and the Messiah first preaching at Nazareth—place, spectators, subject!

APPLICATION.

1. Give especial heed, &c. to the Holy Scriptures. Oh, revere, and love, and consult that blessed book. Be wise, and mighty in the Scriptures.

2. Let it be the test of all your views and doctrines, &c.

3. The rule of your life, &c.

SKETCH CLXXXVI.

ON FIGHTING AGAINST GOD.

"Let us not fight against God."—*Acts* xxiii. 9.

MANY descriptions given of the sinner's state and condition, aliens, outcasts, slaves, enemies, rebels, &c. Now, the text contains a term which forcibly applies to every unregenerate man. All such are fighting against God. Let us,

I. *Describe the Characters to whom the Text applies*

1. Infidels fight against him by denying his providence and revelation.

Few are to be found who say, 'There is no God." Chiefly exclude his government, and reject revelation. These are ringleaders in the ranks of the enemies of God.

2. The profane and practical transgressors fight against his laws.

All sin is against God; against the holiness of his nature, his authority, &c.

3. All unbelievers fight against his gospel.

They steel their hearts, become as adamant. This is an effectual preventive against salvation. "He could not do many mighty works," &c. "He that believeth not is condemned already," &c.

4. All formalists fight against him by secretly resisting his grace.

Near, but not of Christ. Almost, but not altogether Christians. Not far from the kingdom of Christ.

5. All backsliders fight against Christ by crucifying him afresh, &c.

Wound him in the house of his friends Make the wicked to blaspheme, &c.

II. *Let me dissuade you from fighting against God.*

1. It is ungrateful.

Forget not, you fight against your Creator, Benefactor, Redeemer, &c.

2. It is the grossest infatuation.

Can you contend with God? A moth against Omnipotence! Think of Pharaoh of Belshazzar, of Herod, of all his enemies Where are they?

3. It is injurious.

You are not happy. Cannot be so. You are martyring your souls. "No peace saith my God," &c.

4. The result will be terrific.

What will you do on the bed of affliction? When before his bar? He will dash you in pieces as a potter's vessel Oh, be advised, &c.

APPLICATION.

1. Christ is the way to God's favor.

2. Now seek for peace through his name.

SKETCH CLXXXVII.

THE GOSPEL DESPISED

"But they made light of it."—*Matt.* xxii. 5.

IN this parable we have very strikingly placed before us, the goodness and condescension of God, and the wickedness and ungratefulness of man. A rich and splendid feast is provided—the banqueting-room is covered with the abundance of provision, and then a most affectionate and gracious messenger is sent to say, "Come, for all things are now ready." But mark the result: "They all begin to make excuse." They made light of it, and therefore would not come. Let us consider,

I. *What it is to make light of it.*

II. *Who are chargeable with it.*

III. *The Evil and Effects of making light of it.*

I. *What it is to make light of Christ's invitation.*

1. It is to treat it with indifference

To act as though it were a common affair—a matter of inferior moment, &c.; or not a personal matter.

2. It is to be unimpressed with it.

Whatever esteem we profess, it makes it manifest, that the heart is not deeply engaged. That it does not command our best and warmest feelings and faculties, &c.

3. It is to remain unsaved by it.

The gospel is to instruct, to illumine, to soften, to convince, &c. But all these in order that the soul may be saved. Christ is the author of salvation. The Word, the word of salvation. The invitation, is the invitation to be saved. Let us ascertain,

II. *Who are chargeable with it.*

There are some who, by their conduct, go beyond this, and who are more deeply wicked. Among these we may notice, three descriptions of character:

(1) *The Skeptical.* Those who affect to disbelieve the truths of revelation. Who reject the light of the gospel.

(2) *The Scoffer.* Who has not professed to weigh the matter. Who never refers to the evidences. But who sits in the seat of the scorner; who treats religion with ridicule, and with contempt. The fool who mocks at sin, &c.

(3) *The Profane.* Whose heart and life are at utter variance with all that is godly, &c. Who bears the rebel brow, and steeled heart; who cares not for religion at all; the servant of the wicked one. Now, we say, that these, by the excess of their wickedness, even go beyond those who make light of it. Among those who make light of it, are those,

1. Who are absorbed with temporal, yet lawful things.

See Luke xiv. 18. Now, it was quite lawful to buy ground, &c. But how criminal to allow these to have the place of God and religion! Yet, see how common it is. That worldling, under the pretence of diligence and industry, just acts this over again. The command is, "Labor not," &c. "Seek first," &c. "One thing is needful," &c. Then, behold those persons who sacrifice all to personal enjoyments. A man is bound to love, and care for his wife and children; but if he give these all his spare time, and the hours of the sabbath what is it, but the excuse, "I have married a wife," &c. Oh, these lawful concerns, how many thousands they destroy They cannot come." "No man can serve two masters," &c. Now, let me,

2. Refer to those who are satisfied with the form of religion.

There may be attendance at the house of the Lord; yet they do not come to the feast. No part or lot, &c. They have knowledge, yet are not wise; they have name, but still are dead; they have the form, but not the power of godliness. I refer,

3. To undecided inquirers after religion.

Now, these are really anxious; near the way. Like the son in the gospel, they say, "We go, sir," yet do not obey. They desire, they resolve, yet something else keeps the ascendency. They continue after all to make light of it. Let me then,

III. *Show the Evil and Effects of making light of it.*

1. It is irreverent.

The invitation is from God. Angels bow, and worship, and obey. It is the servant making light of the master. The subject making light of the king. And the child making light of the parent. Yea, the creature making light of the Creator.

2. It is ungrateful.

The invitation is to a feast—a feast so precious in its cost, and so precious in itself.

3. It is disobedience, and the rejection of mercy.

The sinner's own advantage is concerned. God cannot be affected by the conduct of man. His glory and happiness are unchangeable. Disobedience of the most mad-like description. It is to make light,

(1) Of the Word of God; of that which is better than thousands of gold and silver.

(2) Of the blessed gospel, which, if but proclaimed once in the regions of woe, would create a jubilee among the spirits of the lost.

(3) It is to make light of the soul; that invaluable jewel; that everlastingly precious gem.

(4) Of God himself. It is the thrusting away of his compassion; goodness trampled under foot; his compassion treated with scorn; his entreaties rejected with contempt.

(5) Of Christ, and all he did, and suf

fered. His incarnation; his teachings; his sorrows his agony; his mock trial; his death; his intercession at God's right hand. It is refusing him his only reward, &c.

(6) Of heaven; and who can describe it; who give a representation of that world of glory, of light, dignity, pleasures, immortality.

(7) Of hell. The presence of the damned; regions of wo; blackness of darkness; the gathering tempest; the desolating storm, which will beat upon the heads of the lost forever.

(8) Eternity. We are indissolubly connected with eternity. We cannot sever ourselves from it. Think of eternity. Duration without limits. Not shortened by millions of years. And that eternity must be of light or darkness, of wo or joy, blessedness or despair, of life or never-expiring death.

APPLICATION.

1. Salvation is all of the grace and mercy of God. God has loved and redeemed us, and it is offered upon terms of grace. All its blessings are prepared and exhibited.

2. Man's ruin is entirely of himself. Nothing can effect it but making light of the gospel.

3. Let me then entreat every one of you to come to the feast. You do not despise the body and health. Why, then, the soul and its felicity?

SKETCH CLXXXVIII.

THE WAY TO HEAVEN.

"Thus saith the Lord, stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls."—*Jer.* vi. 16.

All human beings are travellers. Life is the way in which they are journeying. Eternity is the termination to which all are daily hastening. Most of these travellers are only anxious about the way, and utterly thoughtless about the end. They live recklessly of the future. Some think of the end, but are not prepared to forego present enjoyments, and thus to secure unending felicity. Some few are living according to the revealed will of heaven, and are ever looking onward to the blissful goal of eternal life. The gospel reveals, and offers everlasting glory. It is the business of the Christian ministry to urge upon men the blessings of immortality. To-night, then, let us hold a little conversation on this important subject. God addresses you all, "Thus saith the Lord." Notice,

I. *The Way specified.*

II. *The Course recommended, &c.*

III. *The Promise given.*

I. *The Way specified.*

The way is, doubtless, the way of genuine godliness, of true religion. We cannot enlarge and particularize every thing connected with this way; but that we may not err, we shall notice,

1 Its essential characteristics.

(1) It is a way of faith. We place this first. "For he that cometh," &c. "Without faith," &c. The word of God must be believed, before it can produce any saving effect. Christ demanded this. The apostles urged this. The three thousand. The jailer. The people in Samaria.

(2) It is the way of repentance. Which includes a knowledge of sin. A confession of sin. And turning from sin to God. "God now commandeth all men," &c. This repentance is connected with the believing reception of Christ and the gospel.

(3) It is the way of a profession of Christ. Christ must be put on We must depart from the visible broad way of sin and death, and enter the narrow road of life. "If any man will be my disciple," &c.

(4) It is the way of obedience. The obedience of the heart and life to God. Humbly doing the will of our Father who is in heaven. To be religious, is to serve Christ; to hearken to Christ; to follow Christ; to walk so as to please Christ Now, these are essential to religion; and these things are to be kept up, and displayed to the end of our lives. Faith, repentance, profession, and obedience.

2. The description given of this way in the text. We are referred,

(1) To its antiquity. "Old paths." Old as the days of the Protestant reformation of the primitive fathers; of the holy prophets; of Moses; of the patriarchs; of Abel. We have a new dispensation, New Testament; but it is the religion of the beginning of the world. Same object of worship · same mediator; same holiness requisite.

(2) To its excellency. "Good way.

Morally good. That which is fit, and just, and right; that which is the result of divine goodness to us, and for us, and in us; that which produces good. To ourselves peace, joy, hope, safety, &c. To all around us. Causes us to resemble the good God. And good for body, for soul, for reputation, for our friends, for time, and for eternity.

II. *The Course recommended.*

1. Solemn consideration.

"Stand." Pause in your career. Satan would hurry you onwards. The great mass are lost through inconsideration. Consideration is the turning point. "My people do not know," &c. "Thus saith the Lord, consider your ways." When the prodigal came to himself, he began to consider. "O that they were wise." Consider the past, the present; and then infer as to the future. You are urged,

2. To serious inquiry.

"Ask for the old paths," &c. Ask the pious Christian—the aged Christian—the dying Christian; especially ask of God. "If any man lack," &c. Ask in the use of the means. Take the word of God. Go to the house of God, &c.

3. To the practical adoption of religion.

Having had it placed before you, choose, resolve, and walk therein. "This God shall be my God," &c. "We will go with you," &c. Make it your business, labor, life. Advance in it. Go forward; be faithful unto death. Notice,

III. *The Promise given.*

"And ye shall find rest."

1. Rest from guilty fears. "He will blot out," &c.

2. Rest from the slavery of sin and Satan. "Being made free," &c.

3. Rest of eternal life in heaven. "There remaineth, therefore," &c. "Blessed are the dead," &c.

APPLICATION.

1. Address those in the way of death, &c. "Way of transgressors is hard," &c.

2. Address inquirers. Be in earnest. Do not vacillate. Do not defer. Do not trifle. Now, stand and see.

3. Address the backslider. No rest now. No peace and joy now. Oh, return to this rest.

4. Address the true Christian. Be humble, watchful, fervent, persevering.

SKETCH CLXXXIX.

SECRET AND REVEALED THINGS

A SUNDAY SCHOOL SKETCH.

"The secret things belong unto the Lord our God; but those things which are revealed belong unto us, and to our children forever."—*Deut.* xxix. 29

THE mind of man has been formed for the attainment of knowledge. Knowledge is the light of the mind. Ignorance is darkness. Knowledge is the joy of the mind; it yields the highest mental pleasure. Ignorance produces anxiety, doubt, and wretchedness. Knowledge is the food of the mind; without it, it will be enfeebled, and sicken, and pine away. "For the soul to be without knowledge is not good." Nay, knowledge is the life of the soul. "My people perish for lack of knowledge." But this only applies to spiritual knowledge. A man may have good natural parts, and an intellectual education, and yet be ignorant, wretched, and perishing. The knowledge the soul requires, is divine spiritual knowledge—the knowledge of God, and of salvation. Now, this spiritual saving knowledge—this knowledge of God is only to be obtained from one source, and that source is the Bible. Hence, God has graciously made known his will to man in the oracles of eternal truth. But, mark you, the Scriptures do not reveal every thing. The prying mind of man may ask a thousand things on which the Bible is silent. Now, this is clearly stated in the text. "The secret things," &c. The text contains two clear propositions:

I. *Secret Things are the Lord's.*

II. *Revealed Things belong unto us, and to our children.*

I. *Secret Things are the Lord's.*

1. Nature has its secrets, or mysteries and these are the Lord's.

Science has industriously engaged her influence in ascertaining the wonders of nature, the phenomena of our world. In this way great light has been thrown on subjects which were sealed to the generations of man 6,000 years. Yet, nature teems with mysteries, which no human understanding can penetrate. Science has its bounds. Space of discovery is limited; and God says, beyond that, thou shalt not pass. "Hitherto shalt thou go," &c.

2. Providence has its mysteries and these too are the Lord's.

The Lord reigneth—this is manifest; but clouds and darkness are round about him. Who can solve the perplexing difficulties connected with his reign? Who can tell why such immense districts, densely populated with undying souls, should remain locked up in the bonds of paganism, even in this late hour of the evening of our world.

3. Religion has its mysteries, and these belong to the Lord.

The existence of one supreme, self-existent, eternal God, is infinitely above all the powers of the mind to comprehend. None can understand this, save God. We cannot by searching find out God, or know him to perfection. The origin of moral evil is a secret; and there are thousands of others which are utterly inexplicable to man. What shall we do with these secret things? Let them alone. Leave them with God. They are his—and not ours. But, notice, there are things which we may claim:

II. *Revealed Things belong to us, and to our children.*

Now, notice,

1. That the Holy Scriptures contain these revealed things.

2 Tim. iii. 16; 2 Pet. i. 19–21. The speaker in the text was the first who was thus inspired; and the first five books of the Old Testament were written by him. Now, the truths of revelation were given by God to men in divers manners, and at various times, Heb. i. 1, 2. I do not now enter into a defence of revelation. I refer the doubtful to "Bishop Watson's Apology."

2. The things revealed we could not have known without the Scriptures.

(1) We could not have known God. "The world by wisdom," &c. Hence the universal idolatry, &c. The Athenians, after filling their city with altars, &c., yet erected another to the unknown God.

(2) We could not have known the nature and evil of sin. By the law comes the knowledge of sin. Hence, the heathen moralists gave the most splendid titles to some of the greatest vices that ever dishonored human nature.

(3) We could not have known the way of salvation. Rom. x. 14.

(4) We could not have known of the eternity before us; whether it be an everlasting sleep or what? On these momentous subjects the world would have been ignorant forever, without a revelation.

3. The things revealed meet all the demands of the mind of man

Here, we have the character of God His nature, attributes, and laws Here, sin is described, and the human heart is dissected. Here, we see the way of salvation. The streams of the water of life Here, life and immortality are brought to light. The resurrection, judgment, heaven, and hell, are all made known to us.

4. The things revealed are adapted to every state, and variety of condition.

The philosopher may come to revelation, and he will find depths he cannot fathom All his enlarged desires will be met here. The illiterate will find truths, so clear, so plain, that he cannot fail to understand them. "He that runs may read," &c. The monarch will find the things which will direct him how to live, and rule. The subject how to act and obey. The master how to govern. And the servant how to serve. The parent how to train, and the child how to reverence, &c. Oh, yes, the Bible is the world's book. It is every man's book. It is suited to all, and intended for all.

5. The things revealed are to be regarded as a sacred deposite from God to man.

Next to the gift of Jesus, and the Holy Spirit, they are the greatest treasure which God has given to man—a treasure infinitely beyond our powers to compute: but as such, they involve great responsibility.

(1) Are we not responsible for the reception of them? Yes; and that reception should be of the most cordial and grateful description; yet, how men skeptically reject them—many cavil at them.

(2) Are we not responsible for reading and understanding them? The command is, to seek out of the book of the Lord, and to read. We are to receive the truths they declare, and be wiser through the reception of them. So also we must be doers of the word. We must love the word of God. Show forth all its practical truths, &c

(3) We are responsible for their diffusion. All men are deeply interested in the truths of revelation. Bread of life; balsam of life; light of life: but to our own posterity we are especially bound to hand them down. See Deut. vi. 6, &c. Neglect of this is deep-toned criminality. Cruelty to our children; ingratitude to our ancestors; disobedience to heaven. Next

to our children, there are those who would rise up in ignorance, if others did not care for them. Some are orphans, others fatherless; and others, so far as their souls are concerned, even worse still. Now, revealed things belong to them; and it is ours to bestow them. In Sabbath schools, this great end is kept constantly in view. The volume of revelation is the class-book placed in their hands. And to make them understand, feel, and practise it, is the end of sabbath-school tuition. We are deeply culpable in the sight of God, if we withhold our influence from the rising age.

APPLICATION.

1. Let the subject teach us to avoid presumptuous curiosity. Meddle not with secret things. They are God's, not yours. Think of the fifty thousand and seventy men, who were destroyed by God for looking into the ark, 1 Sam. vi. 19. Think of Uzziah, smitten with leprosy even to the day of his death, for daring to offer incense before the Lord, 2 Chron. xxvi. 20.

2. Let the subject teach us the true test of all doctrines, ordinances, and duties. None are genuine except they be among the revealed things. This is the true test. "To the law" &c. "Search the Scriptures," &c.

3. We shall have to give an account of revealed things at the last day. Has the word of God enlightened you? convinced you? regenerated you? sanctified you? Are you making it your guide to eternal glory? Be sure you hand it down to posterity. "For revealed things belong to us and our children."

SKETCH CXC.

THE VARIOUS FORMS OF ATHEISM.

"Without God in the world."—*Ephes.* ii. 12.

THE text is addressed to the Christian believers at Ephesus, and refers to their condition before they received the gospel. Ephesus was a celebrated city of Asia Minor, in which was the renowned Temple of Diana, one of the seven wonders of the world. This temple was 141 yards long, and about 70 yards wide, and contained 127 pillars, made by so many kings. All the provinces of Asia assisted in its erection; and it was two hundred years in building. Paul preached the gospel here about the year 54; an account of which appears in Acts xix. A Christian church was afterwards formed, of which Timothy was the first bishop or pastor. The first of the seven epistles in the Revelation was addressed to the church in Ephesus. Our text gives the moral condition of the Ephesians before they were savingly acquainted with the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, this account will apply equally to all who are in the darkness of idolatry; and it is also applicable to the state of every unrenewed soul of man. We shall not, therefore, occupy your time in explaining this description as applying to the Ephesians, or to pagan nations; but show how it applies to all who have not felt the saving grace of God. We notice, then, that a state of unregeneracy is being without God in the world.

I. *There is the professed Atheist, who denies the Existence of God.*

Such there have been in every age of the world. David refers to this character, "The fool hath said," &c. There have been atheistical writers, and founders of systems of philosophy, so called. This, however, is rather the madness of wickedness, than wickedness itself. We cannot, even by the light of nature and reason, fail to perceive the footsteps of the Infinite and Supreme Creator of all things. No absurdity so great as atheism. No credulity so complete as that which can even for a moment believe it. No folly so flagrant as that which confesses it. Every thing proclaims aloud that there is a God.

II. *There is the Atheism of the Heart, which excludes God from the Affections and Thoughts.*

"The carnal mind is enmity," &c. Not merely indifferent, but at total variance, &c. There is the striking expression, Rom. i. 28. "Even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge." See also Ps. x. 4. How wicked is this, for the children not to love the parent, &c. Though creatures, laden with benefits, not to think of the Creator. For the culprit deserving death, not to think of the affectionate, merciful Judge, &c

III. *There is practical Atheism, or the Atheism of the Life.*

Now this is, in connection with atheism of heart, applicable to all rebellious unconverted sinners. Such are.

1. Without the image of God.

"God created man in," &c. Now it is effaced; nay, more, a foul and Satanic impress is in its place. The likeness is gone. Knowledge, holiness, dominion, felicity—all gone.

2. Without the love of God.

This is manifest, from what was said of he heart.

3. Without the fear of God.

Who would not fear him, &c. Angels fear him. Devils fear him. Sinners have no fear of God before their eyes. His name they impiously profane; his laws violate; his threatenings despise.

4. Without the acknowledgment of God.

Do not acknowledge his goodness in praise, ungrateful, thankless, &c. Do not acknowledge his providence, by confidential prayer. Seek not guidance, nor help, nor security, nor his blessing.

5. Without the favor of God.

Not without his mercy and compassion, or they would at once perish; but God does not approve of them. "His face is set," &c. "He is angry," &c. His threatenings are upon them.

APPLICATION.

1. Learn the misery of such a state. No real bliss; no true peace; no joyous hope; no certain security.

2. Learn the fearful consequences of such a state. In affliction; in death; in judgment; in eternity.

3. Learn the only remedy for such a state. Acknowledge God. Return to him through Christ. Seek his mercy, &c.

SKETCH CXCI.

ABRAHAM'S ADDRESS TO GOD.

"And Abraham answered and said, Behold now I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, which am but dust and ashes."—*Gen.* xviii. 27.

ABRAHAM is styled the Friend of God. Friendship includes confidence, esteem, and fellowship. There obviously existed all this between God and Abraham. Abraham relied his all upon God. He esteemed him with his whole soul. And he had close fellowship with him. In like manner, God highly esteemed Abraham, and communicated his mind to him, as a man doth to his friend. The cup of the iniquity of the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah was now full. The reign of forbearance was ended. Vengeance was about to be executed; but God would not withhold it from Abraham. Abraham interceded on their behalf; and having presented one plea, he introduces the second with the language of the text. Observe three things,

I. *The Being we worship.*

"The Lord." Jehovah is a Being infinitely beyond all description, or conception. None can know him fully, or find him out to perfection. When we draw near to him, we should remember that the Lord,

1. Is infinitely great.

There have been great human intellects. Angels are great and illustrious beings: but they are as drops to the ocean, when compared to God, or as rays of light contrasted with the overwhelming effulgence of the solar system. The works of the Lord are great—the Author must be infinitely greater. "Do not I fill heaven and earth, saith the Lord."

2. Incomprehensibly glorious.

The Psalmist says, "His glory is above the heavens." So glorious, that the sun shining at noonday is but a very faint emblem of him So glorious, that no man could look upon his face and live. So glorious, that cherubim, and seraphim, the highest orders of the intelligences of heaven, bow at his feet, and, veiling their faces, worship before him.

3. Transcendently holy.

Every thing connected with Deity is holy. Dwelling, is the habitation of holiness. Name is holy. Attendants, holy. His essence is holy—so holy, that the very heavens are unclean, &c. This is the burden of heavenly worship. See Isai. vi. 3; Rev. iv. 8.

4. Unboundedly benevolent.

Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good. "The whole earth is full of the goodness of the Lord." Good to all. The great universal Parent of the universe. The benignant Father of all mankind. This, then, is the great object of religious worship. Contrast with this view,

II. *The true Character of the best Worshippers.*

"Dust and ashes." The term seems to indicate,

1. Our origin and mortality.

Formed of the dust; residents of the dust; travellers to the dust.

2. Our depravity.

Dust and ashes. Ashes are only the refuse of what was once more valuable. Man originally was great, dignified, and good Now, he is fallen, debased, and worthless, &c. Notwithstanding,

III. *In Worship God allows us to speak unto Him.*

Now, we do this,

1. In adoration and praise.

We celebrate his glory; extol him, bless his holy name, &c.

2. In confession of sin.

If we say that we have no sin, &c. David says, "I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord." See this exemplified, Ps. li. Prodigal, &c.

3. In supplication and prayer.

Prayer is addressing God; inquiring of him; asking his blessing, &c Abraham, in the text. Now, when speaking to the Lord, we should do it,

1. With reverential fear. "In thy fear will I worship," &c.

2. With deep self-abasement

3. With resignation to His divine will. He knows best, &c Christ's example in Gethsemane.

SKETCH CXCII.

FUNERAL SKETCH.

"For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus, will God bring with him."—1 *Thess.* iv. 14.

"Salvation, O the joyful sound,
What pleasure to our ears!
A sovereign balm for every wound,
A cordial for our fears."

Yes, this is the glory of the gospel, that it completely meets the condition and exigency of the sinner. Man is guilty, and it reveals forgiveness; man is an alien, and it brings him back to the divine family; man is unholy, and it regenerates and sanctifies him; man is wretched, and it imparts abiding peace; man is dying, and it reveals to him a better world; man is destined to be the resident of the dust, and it throws its celestial radiance across the tomb;—And addresses us, "But I would not have you be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus, will God bring with him; 1 Thess. iv. 13, 14.

I. *The pleasing Metaphor by which Death is described.*

"Sleep." The idea is very commonly presented us in revelation. Of David, it is said, that when he had served his generation according to the will of God, he fell asleep. Daniel, predicting the resurrection of the saints, says, "Many that sleep in the dust shall awake," Dan. xii. 2. Jesus said of the nobleman's daughter, "She sleepeth." So also when going to visit the mournful sisters of Bethany, he said, "Our friend Lazarus sleepeth." Paul also says, "We shall not all sleep, but we shall be changed," 1 Cor. xv. 51. Now, the metaphor of sleep represents death,

1. As a state of rest.

And this is a perfect contrast to the state of the Christian in life. Now, he is a servant, and has to toil in the vineyard of Christ. But then the master says, It is enough; "well done, good and faithful servant." Now he is a racer, and has to agonize to obtain the crown. Then he touches the goal, and the garland is entwined around his brow. Now, he is a pilgrim, a sojourner, as were his fathers; he travels on the rugged road of life, leaning upon his staff. Then, he is within the walls of the city of his everlasting habitation. Now, he is a soldier, and he is in the field of carnage and death—then he has grappled with the last enemy, and has shouted "Victory," &c. No more din of war assails his ear. Now, he is a mariner tossed by the waters of the sea of life; now, bestilled by the calm, then enveloped in the fog, and again driven hither and thither by the storm. But then, he has passed over the last heaving billow, he has gained the celestial port, and has entered the haven in everlasting safety. Thus, is the sleep of death a state of rest. Then the metaphor denotes,

2. A state of unconsciousness.

In sleep, the avenues of the senses are closed. "We see not—we hear not," &c. Are insensible to all events which surround us. So in death, we are strangers to all that is done beneath the sun. Job xiv 21 "His sons come to honor, and he knoweth it not; and they are brought low, but he

perceiveth it not of them." Eccles. ix. 5, "For the living know that they shall die; but the dead know not any thing, neither have they any more a reward; for the memory of them is forgotten." Their virtues may be extolled, but they know it not; and now, even a good name affords no gratification. Their names may be cast out as evil, the tongue of slander may be whetted against them; but they know it not. Their projects and plans may prosper, but others have entered into their labors, and reap the reward. Their families may be subjected to distressing afflictions and calamities, but they know it not. In the grave, the ear is not disturbed by the moanings of sorrow; the eye weeps not; the heart heaves not. No aching head; no anxious breast. All is hushed into the quietness of unconscious insensibility. The metaphor further shows,

3. The limited duration of this state.

A few hours' sleep, and it is over. So death has not the signet of perpetuity upon it. It will only detain us one short-lived night, and then be over forever. Of all times that spent in sleep is apparently the most fleeting and rapid. Have you never been amazed how soon the night has flown —how soon the light of day has broken forth? So will it appear to Abel who first fell asleep: the thousands of years will be but as a night; and the difference will only be between Abel and the last who shall die, as one who retires a little earlier to rest. Of these, the apostle speaks, ver. 15, that the dead shall have the precedency over those who are alive. Notice,

II. *The important Characteristic in the Death of the Righteous.*

"They that sleep in Jesus." Now, this implies,

1. That they have been savingly united to Christ in life.

The term, "in Jesus," is very emphatically applied to the true believer. "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature." "There is therefore now no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus." Now, these passages are clearly illustrated by the figures under which Jesus is set forth. Christ is our City of Refuge, and we must be in him to be secure from the avenger of blood. Christ is the vine, and we must be living branches in him. Now, it is thus that we become interested in the blessings of the everlasting covenant. Our death cannot be safe or happy without this.

2. It implies that they have died in Christ, as well as lived in him.

The Scriptures are very express on the subject of perseverance to the end. "Be thou faithful unto death," &c. "Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord," &c. How necessary, how important then, to have this evidence. To be able, as Simeon to realize Christ in the arms of our faith and exclaim "Now, lettest thou thy servant depart in peace," &c.

3. To sleep in Jesus implies that they sleep in the personal certain hope of an interest in all Christ hath obtained for them

The salvation of the gospel is present; *now*, we enjoy it, &c. But it is progressive even till we die. Yes, it extends its blessings through all eternity. Among those blessings which are to succeed death, we must especially notice the resurrection of the body, its reunion with the soul, and the glorification of both to all eternity. Now, these are not the dreams of visionaries, not the delusions of fancy; but the infallible doctrines of the gospel of Christ Yes, those beautiful lines are indeed appropriate to the saint, "We commit this, our brother, to the earth, in sure and certain hope," &c. Observe, then,

III. *The glorious Declaration concerning those who sleep in Jesus.*

"Will God bring with him" The subject refers to Christ's second advent. See ver. 16. Then will Jesus raise his saints, and they shall ascend with him, as his illustrious train; and so be forever with the Lord Observe, those who sleep in Jesus,

1. Shall have a part in the first resurrection.

"Christ, the first fruits," &c. "Blessed and holy are they who have," &c. "The upright shall have dominion over them in the morning."

2. They shall possess the glorious image of Jesus.

See Phil. iii. 20, 21, and 1 John iii. 2.

3. They shall be coheirs with Christ forever and ever.

Rom. viii. 17; John xvii. 21; Rev. iii. 21

APPLICATION.

1. Learn, the great object of true religion, is to prepare for death, the grave and eternity.

2. Our consolation at the removal of saints.

3. The happiness of the completed family at the last day. No more sickness, or curse, or death.

SKETCH CXCIII.

SELF-CONSECRATION

NEW YEAR'S SKETCH.

"Who then is willing to consecrate his service this day unto the Lord?"—1 *Chron.* xxix 5

Our text is an appeal of David to the princes and congregation of Israel, on behalf of the temple which Solomon was engaged to erect for the Lord of Hosts. David, anxious that the splendid work should receive the combined attention of the nation at large, thus addressed them, see ver. 1–5. Then he urges upon them the appeal of the text, "Who then is willing," &c. God has set his heart on the erection of a spiritual temple—an edifice composed of immortal beings. His Son is both the great basis, and the sole architect of it. He is appointed both to build the temple, and bear the glory. This temple, in its cost and splendor, is to exceed all erections that have ever been surveyed by men, or angels. In this temple, God is to have his abiding throne; and its happy worshippers are to enjoy its refulgent glories forever and ever. God has been rearing it from the period that Abel first offered his acceptable sacrifice. God erects this celestial structure through instrumental agency. He has honored man by thus employing him for his glory. Thousands of immortal souls are laboring together with God, whose meat and drink is to do his will, and to assist in raising the walls of this edifice. And thousands of thousands are anxiously praying and believing for that grand consummation, when the top stone shall be brought on with shouting, "grace, grace, unto it." Now, our spiritual David, even David's Lord, appeals to you this evening. He addresses you from the excellent glory, and says, "Who then is willing," &c. Let us consider,

I. *The Extent of the Divine Claims.*

II *The Grounds of the Divine Claims.*

III. *The Appeal on behalf of the Divine Claims.*

I. *The Extent of the Divine Claims.*

1. God claims the surrender of our entire selves.

Notwithstanding we are estranged, aliens, rebels, &c. In a state of hostility, &c. Now, every thing given to God, while we are thus, is rejected by him. A rebel's homage he rejects—a rebel's service he will not own. No, first of all he requires ourselves. "My son, give me thine heart." He claims our affections, of love, delight, and confidence. "Thou shalt love," &c. "Delight thyself," &c. "Commit thy way to him, trust also in him."

He claims the homage of the mind. That the intellect be sanctified, &c. That we know God, admire, &c.; celebrate his perfections; laud and bless his name, &c.

He claims the obedience of the life That we fear always before him. That we keep his commandments, &c., to do them. Walk in his statutes. Make his law our rule of life. Endeavor always to please him. Enoch had this testimony, that he pleased God. Now, there is only one way of acceptance, by surrendering ourselves to God through faith in the Lord Jesus. Christ is our altar, as well as sacrifice; on this we must place ourselves trusting only to Jesus for pardon, justification, and eternal life. Having surrendered ourselves, he requires,

2. The consecration of our talents

Now, men have diversity of talents. The great mass is devoted to sin, to pleasure, and the world. God requires that our talents should be sanctified to his service. Have we the talent of large mental capacity? Nowhere is there such scope for it as in the cause of religion. Have we the gift of eloquence? Piety presents a thousand topics for its practical exhibition. Behold a Newton, a Boyle, a Sir W. Jones, a Locke. With hundreds of others who devoted all their powers to the glory of God He requires,

3. Our influence.

That is, our power with, and over, others. All persons have some amount of this. That authoritative, yet affectionate father possesses it. That tender and loving mother has it. That elder brother—that friend has it. Almost every one has some of it. The father possessed of the dumb child brought him to Jesus. Andrew brought

Simon, his brother, to Jesus. The woman of Samaria fetched her neighbors to come and see the Messiah. Now, God requires our influence.

4. He requires our time.

When we are engaged in the regular duties of life, we are glorifying God, who has enjoined diligence and industry. Time, therefore, must be devoted to the purposes which God has appointed. And you will observe, that sacred things must have the precedency. "Seek first, the kingdom," &c. "My voice thou shalt hear in the morning." Time is our seed-sowing opportunity. We are to sow to the Spirit, and for eternal life.

5. He requires our property.

God claims all the gold and silver as his own. Men have it as he may deposite it. Some less, others more. Now, we are only stewards to occupy for him, till Christ come. This often keeps the heart from him. See the young man, &c. When grace influences the soul it will melt before it. See Acts ii. 44. The gold of Sheba must be given to Christ. Let us then,

II. *Consider the Grounds of the Divine Claims.*

1. Then the relationship in which God stands to you.

These claims are the claims of Deity. The Supreme Ruler of heaven and earth. Myriads of angels adore him, &c. This Deity is your Father; the author of your being. In him you live and move, &c. He gave your bodies all their members—fashioned you in secret. He endowed your souls with all their faculties. He stamped upon you the impress of immortality.

2. There are the obligations arising from his boundless goodness to you.

I have referred to him as the author of your being. Now, trace his connection with you from the dawn of your existence, to this hour. Surely goodness and mercy have followed you, &c. From his wardrobe you have been constantly clothed. From his table you have been regularly fed. His air you breathe—every instant you are enjoying his mercies.

3. Then there are the demands arising from redeeming grace.

"Ye are not your own," &c. God says, 'Return unto me, for I have redeemed thee."

4. There is an appeal to your welfare.

God addresses your self-love. Do you not love life? "Hear, and your souls shall live." "Whoso findeth me findeth life." Do you love refined pleasure? "Her ways are ways," &c. Do you not desire to be interested in a benignant providence? "Who shall harm you," &c. Do you not wish for a peaceful death? "Mark the upright," &c. "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints." Are you not solicitous for a glorious eternity? "Then shall the king say," &c. These, then, are the advantages of consecrating yourselves to the Lord. Notice,

III. *The Appeal on behalf of the Divine Claims.*

Now, this appeal is,

1. To your voluntary choice.

No compulsion in religion; no coercing men into piety; no accidental godliness. It must be of your own choice. So God placed the tree of knowledge, &c., before our first parents. So Joshua appealed to the Israelites. "Behold I have set before you life and death." So Jesus invited all men, &c. Said to the rejectors, you will not come, &c. This appeal is,

2. To all of you.

It is a general appeal, no exception. Who then? I ask *you* who are *young*, will you, &c. There is certainly a peculiar blessedness about early piety. You have time, energies, an enlarged sphere before you. I ask you, who are middle-aged, you parents and masters. It will bless your households—expel the plague spot—keep away the destroying angel, &c. I ask the old, the gray-headed. I know you cannot do much; but your soul may be saved. It is not too late to avoid eternal death. Now, I ask you, each and all. "Who then is willing," &c. This appeal is,

3. For your present decision.

"This day." The past is irreparable—the future is uncertain. God wants you to consecrate yourselves now. "To-day, if ye will hear his voice." The first Sabbath evening in this year invites you to begin a new course, &c. "Now then, Who is willing," &c.

APPLICATION.

Shall I dare to hope that one poor sinner has felt the force of this address, and is now waiting to perform this act of self-dedication. Do you ask how it is to be done. Notice,

1. You must do it with serious deliber

tion. Of all engagements it is the most momentous. Do not be like the foolish king, &c. Or the way-side hearers

2. Do it with earnest determination. It will require fervor of soul. You will have difficulties, enemies, &c. Holy resolution is indispensable.

3. Do it in humble dependence upon Divine grace. He will draw you, keep you, hold you up. But you must look entirely to God's mercy, and Christ's merits.

4. You must do it forever. Having put your hands to the plough, they must never be withdrawn

SKETCH CXCIV.

LYDIA

"And on the Sabbath we went out of the city by a river side, where prayer was wont to be made; and we sat down, and spake unto the women which resorted thither. And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard us: whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul. And when she was baptized, and her household, she besought us, saying, If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house, and abide there. And she constrained us."—*Acts* xvi. 13–15.

The age of the apostles was emphatically the age of the dispensation of the Holy Ghost. They possessed his influences in copious effusions. Those influences invested them with miraculous powers for their arduous labors. By it they spoke with divers tongues. They possessed the powers of healing the sick, and raising the dead. The Holy Ghost also directed their journeys, and pointed out the spheres of their labors. It seems that Paul had intended to have gone into Asia, &c., see ver. 6; but afterwards, a vision appeared to him, ver. 9; upon which, they went into Macedonia, and the first scene of their labors was the city of Philippi. Then follows the interesting narrative of the text.

Observe,

I. *The Circumstances detailed concerning the Apostle's Labors.*

1. The time is noted.

"On the Sabbath." One of the greatest mercies God has conferred upon us, is the Sabbath. A day of cessation from toil, bodily labors, and fatigue. A day for especial religious instruction. The soul's market-day. What pious heart has not felt the influence of those lines, as the Sabbath has dawned,

> "Another six day's work is done,
> Another Sabbath is begun,
> Return my soul, enjoy thy rest,
> Improve the day thy God hath blest."

2. The place is described.

"By the river side." The Jews had three sorts of erections for the worship of God. The Temple, Synagogues, and Proseucha, or oratories for prayer. Now, these oratories were not covered over, but were composed of elevated walls, just sufficient to preserve from the inclemency of the weather. Often they were erected in the suburbs of cities, and towns. Sometimes at the foot of mountains, or generally near to rivers. It is clear Christ spent a whole night in prayer in one of these, as described, Luke vi. 12. It is likely, therefore, that at Philippi there was no synagogue; so that the Jews residing there, went to worship in this Proseucha, or oratory, by the river side. Observe,

3. Its devotional character is specified.

"A place where prayer was wont," &c. What a delightful description. How sacred was the spot. How high in heaven's estimation. Travellers visiting Philippi, would have gazed upon its buildings, its national curiosities, and works of art. But angels had viewed these without any emotions; yet, had doubtless often lingered and ministered to those pious spirits, who had frequented the oratory by the water side, where prayer was wont to be made. Ah! the hallowed scenes of that place will never be known until the light of eternity shall make them manifest. Observe,

4. An account of the attendants of this place is also given.

"The women who resorted thither." What do these words imply? Why that few men (or rather none) visited this sacred spot. What is asserted? That women did resort to this place for devotional purposes. How honorable to female piety! What a lasting monument to the superiority of the female character! And so it has been in every age and country of the world I will say nothing now of the honors of female piety in ancient times. I will pass by Sarah, and Deborah, and Ruth, and Hannah, with a noble host which we can not enumerate; and will only observe, that sad and sorrowing as was the life of the

Blessed Redeemer, it would have been still more bitter and wretched, had it not been for the tender and affectionate regards of female worth and piety. Oh, Blessed Redeemer, do I see thee deserted by all thy disciples in the hour of thy deepest agony; yet, these devoted heroines, whose love nothing could quench—whose fortitude nothing could shake, still cleaved to thee, thou man of sorrows! We see something of the same still. Our churches are chiefly composed of pious women: and there is not a benevolent society existing which does not depend chiefly upon female influence for stability and support. Lydia is the first European convert recorded. These, then, are the circumstances detailed concerning the sphere, &c., of their labors.

II. *The Conversion of one of the Auditory is described*, ver. 14. Observe,

1. A concise account of this person is given.

Her name is Lydia, a name which ought to be a favorite with all Christian mothers. Her country was Thyatira, a place in Asia, to which one of the seven epistles in the Revelation is addressed. Her business. She was a seller of purple. The ancient purple was a very expensive, precious dye. It was obtained from a shell-fish, which the Jews called Chalson. With this costly article the fringes of the Jewish garments were dyed. Those too who were exceedingly rich, were distinguished by wearing garments dyed with purple. Now, Lydia was a merchant, who traded either in the dye itself, or in articles of purple color. It is observed that she was a Jewish worshipper. "She worshipped God," most likely a proselyte, as was the Ethiopian eunuch, as was also Cornelius.

2. Her conversion is described.

(1) The instrumentality employed was the gospel. Paul was the preacher. It is not stated what things he said; but we need not be in doubt. He knew nothing among men save Christ, and him crucified. He, doubtless, preached the gospel to the women assembled.

(2) The power exerted was Divine. The Lord wrought the work. Religion, in its commencement, progress, and termination, is all of God. He is the author and finisher of our faith. Every description given of religion, shows that God must be its author. It is a creation "Ye are his workmanship, created anew," &c. It is a resurrection. "You hath he quickened," &c. In order to conversion, there must be light. "And he commanded light," &c. There must be conviction and contrition, and an entire renewal of the heart. See Ezek. xxxvi. 26.

(3) The change produced was in the heart. "Whose heart," &c. The seat of genuine piety is the heart. All short of this is not religion. The kingdom of God is within you. Other things will precede; the eyes will be opened; the ears must be unstopped; yet these may be effected without more. But in conversion the heart is changed. It is a renovation of the soul. "All old things must pass away," &c. This change is expressly specified. "Whose heart the Lord opened"—previously it was closed. Closed against the truth; against the entrance of Christ; closed with unbelief; with enmity, &c. "Behold," says Christ, "I stand at the door," &c. Now Lydia's heart melted, and warmed, and expanded; and its portals were stretched out wide, so that Christ took possession and was enthroned.

III. *The Effects which the converting Grace of God produced, are specified.*

These effects were striking and important.

1. There was obedience.

"She attended to the things," &c. Genuine faith produces obedience. "He who heareth my sayings and doeth them," &c. Religion is obedience to the truth. We are not Christ's, unless we learn of Christ, and follow him.

2. There was profession.

"She was baptized." And this seems to have been an immediate act. This was what the apostles were commanded to teach and enjoin. How proper it appears, that when Christ's religion is imbibed, that it should be publicly professed.

3. There was gratitude and hospitality

Her opened heart caused her to open her house. She was not only grateful to God, but to his servants. She wished to express her grateful love. They were strangers in Philippi, and she bade them welcome, and made her house their home. This was not a formal ceremony. For she constrained them.

APPLICATION.

Let me remind you, my hearers

1. Of your present situation. "In the place where prayer is wont to be made."

2. The word of life is now addressed to you.

3. We invite you to hear, believe, obey, and profess the Gospel of Christ.

SKETCH CXCV.

THE PUBLICATION OF THE GOSPEL.

"How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings; that publisheth peace, that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation, that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth."—*Isa.* lii. 7.

WHATEVER literal reference this passage might have to the interesting deliverance of the people of God from the Chaldean bondage, it is clear that it chiefly refers to the great and glorious announcement of the gospel of Christ. As such, it is found in that striking passage of the great apostle of the Gentiles. "For whosoever shall call," &c., Rom. x. 13. It is in this application of it, that it is deeply interesting and supremely important to every human being. Observe, the text contains,

I. *A delightful Representation of the Gospel of Christ.*

II. *An interesting Description of the Mode of its Publication.*

I. *A delightful Representation of the Gospel of Christ.*

1. The gospel is represented as announcing good tidings.

This is literally the meaning of the word gospel, "good tidings." Shall I say that these good tidings centre in one glorious fact? The provision of a Saviour for a guilty world; every thing else is based on this fact. The angels said, "We bring you good tidings of great joy, for unto you," &c. This was the event which had engaged the minds of the ancient seers—which had animated the priests—which had been the unvarying theme of the prophets—which had formed the great source of the rejoicing of the Old Testament church. "This," says the apostle, "is a faithful saying," &c. Every thing connected with the gift of the Saviour, forms matter for joy. The supreme dignity of his person; the completeness of his work; the glory of his doctrine; the efficacy of his death; and the exhaustless fulness of his blessings.

2. It publishes peace.

Man united with the fallen apostate spirits against God. His rebellion exposed him to God's displeasure; involved him under the condemnation of the curse; arrayed heaven against him. In addition to this, his guilt filled his own conscience with distracting fears, and with overwhelming, gloomy forebodings of eternal ruin; so that all abroad is against him, and all within against him. The gospel is a message of reconciliation, and an embassage of peace. It announces that Christ became the Prince of Peace; that he has endured the curse, and obtained peace for us by the blood of his cross. That he is the one Mediator, and hath effected a covenant of peace between God and man. It whispers peace to the conscience, and produces peace and joy in the Holy Ghost, &c.

3. It brings tidings of good.

Not only is God at peace with the sinner, but he waits to bless him with all good.

(1) There is acceptance into God's favor, and that is good; better than life; it is the light and life of the soul. "He restoreth my soul." Smiles on it, loves it, &c.; delights, &c.

(2) There is divine adoption. Being received into the family of God; forming part of his household; provision for all their wants, &c.

(3) There are the influences of the Spirit, and these are good. To illumine, to convince; to guide; to solace; to meeten for heaven.

(4) There are all the promises, the precious promises of the new covenant, and these are good; and these the gospel offers to us; "All yea," &c.; all-sufficient grace; lack no good thing; tidings of good for all states, and persons, and times.

4. The gospel publishes salvation.

A salvation just meeting the demands of the sinner. He is guilty; he is depraved; he is condemned; a salvation begun on earth, carried on in time, and consummated in glory; eternal salvation.

5. The gospel declares the reign of Jesus.

Christ is king in Zion, according to the saying of Jehovah; Ps. ii. 6, 7, &c. "Lo, this is our God, we have waited for him and he will save us;" "he reigneth," "witness to it, ye cherubim and seraphim

and all ye hosts who worship," &c.; "he reigneth." Witness, ye children of Zion. 'He is head over all things," &c. In his spiritual Zion he has his throne, &c. The Son of David holds his court, "and sits in judgment there." "He reigneth," attest it, ye who have received Christ into your souls by faith. Is he not supreme in your affections? his kingdom is within you. "He reigneth;" "the earth is the Lord's;" "he directs all things," &c.; he is the Governor of the nations; all things are by him. "He reigneth;" devils know it, and try to flee from before him, exclaiming, "What have we to do," &c. "He reigneth;" "of his government there shall be no end;" he shall live and reign for ever and ever; "his name shall endure," &c.

II. *An interesting Description of the Mode of its Publication.*

1. Notice the messengers appointed to declare it.

Jesus himself went forth preaching the good tidings of his kingdom. He taught the people the great mystery of salvation, &c. Now, the messengers are men, not angels; men who have been called and qualified, sent of God; men who have known and felt the power of the truth themselves. "We have this treasure in earthen vessels," &c.

2. The publication of this gospel is to be free and extensive.

They are to go forth prominently,—to ascend the mountain-tops, and there, before God, and angels, and men, they are to preach the unsearchable riches of Christ. Besides sinners are wandering on the top of the mountains. Mountains of ignorance —mountains of skepticism—mountains of profanity—mountains of idolatry. Like the great and good Shepherd, the heralds of the cross must pursue them with the overtures of mercy, and the shout of salvation. The message of grace is to be published throughout the world, and to every creature.

3 The publication of the gospel is to be a source of joy and delight to perishing souls.

By some it will be ridiculed; by others spurned; by others coolly and indifferently heard; but to thousands it shall be spirit and life,—it shall be solace and bliss. Thousands shall hail the messengers of the cross, and from their hearts obey that gospel, &c. "How beautiful," &c See, that colony or nation has revolted; has been in arms against the monarch; the sentence has gone forth! they are fearing the dread wrath, &c.; but behold, the king sends an act of grace, of amnesty, &c. The inhabitants are waiting for its publication; they are looking out; at last they see at a distance, on the top of the mountains, the approaching herald; oh, how they are gladdened, and exclaim, "How beautiful," &c. See that country suffering from famine; death, &c., surrounding them; the people all pale and haggard; messengers are sent to seek supplies; provision is obtained, the staff of life found in abundance, the people are waiting. Well, at last the messengers are seen returning, on the tops of the mountains, &c. "How beautiful," &c. See that camp, and behold death in a direful form is spreading destruction through it. Every remedy fails; total extinction is threatened; when hope fails, physicians with efficacious remedies arrive; they lift their eyes towards the hills, and exclaim, "How beautiful," &c.

APPLICATION.

1. The subject should excite admiration and praise. The earth is full of the goodness of the Lord. But here is matchless love, unparalleled grace.

2. Have we experienced the saving power of the gospel? Have we hailed its tidings? "Blessed are the people," &c. Is it our boast, and joy, and song?

3. The infatuation of the rejectors of the good news "salvation." "How can they escape," &c. What shall the end of those be, &c.

4. The duty of the church to diffuse the gospel to the ends of the earth. Its prayers, energies, and means should all bear to this one great end, &c.

SKETCH CXCVI.

ALL THINGS IN CHRIST'S HAND

"The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand."—*John* iii. 35.

It had been predicted by Malachi the prophet, 400 years before, that a messenger should be sent to prepare the way of the Lord. See Mal. iv. 1. This prediction was realized in John the Baptist when he

appeared publishing to the people the appearance of the kingdom of God. Many listened to John, became his disciples, and were baptized of him in Jordan. At length the illustrious Redeemer also appeared, and was recognised by John, and entered upon his mission by baptism. After this, while John was baptizing in Ænon, near to Salem, some of John's disciples questioned him as to the Redeemer, which elicited the statements from the 27th to the last verse of this chapter. Among the rest of the truths there delivered, we find the glorious statement of the text, "The Father loveth the Son," &c. Observe,

I. *The Declaration of the Father's Love to Christ.*

II. *The Authority and Power with which He hath invested him.*

I. *The Declaration of the Father's Love to Christ.* Observe,

1. The object of the Father's love.

"The Son." The distinctions involved in the Deity are profound depths, utterly unsearchable. It is quite clear from Scripture testimony, that Christ possesses a complete equality with the Father. "He thought it not robbery," &c. Some have contended for the eternity of those titles in the Godhead. It appears to me that Christ is the Son of God, by his mysterious conception of the virgin by the Holy Ghost; and that it is alone applicable to him in his mediatorial character and work. It deserves your careful notice, that while Jesus was the virgin's child, he was the Son of the Most High.

2. Mark the nature of the Father's love to Christ.

Love has a variety of channels in which it flows, and by which it is designated. All flowing streams have one general title, but they are distinguished from each other by their own peculiar appellation. Now, so it is with the love of God; there is that outgoing of goodness which regards the wants of all his creatures. Now, this we term benevolence and beneficence. There is the exercise of goodness to the guilty; this is grace and mercy. There is that which withholds his wrath from the wicked; this is long-suffering. Then, there is the attachment he displays to angels and the saints; and this we term complacency and delight. Now, the Father's love to the Son is of the last description; it is the Father's complacent approving love of Jesus, and doubtless it is the highest and most extended display of that love. See Is xlii. 1, &c. Observe,

3. The grounds of the Father's love to Christ.

(1) On the absolute unity and resemblance which existed between them. All the works of God bear his impress, and he proclaimed his approbation of the whole But man was made in his especial likeness; and in him he more abundantly delighted. But Jesus has a nature one with his own, he reflects all the forms of his eternal character—the brightness of his glory, &c.—image of the invisible God; especially the image of his immaculate purity.

(2) His perfect obedience to his Father's will. The law of God was in his heart. It was his meat and drink to do the will, &c. That law had been violated by Adam. The world in a state of rebellion, &c. Jesus was consumed with zeal for the divine glory; he obeyed all his Father's commandments, and never wearied until he could say, "I have finished the work," &c.; then he was resigned and passive in the sufferings and sorrows he was called to bear. "The cup," &c.

(3) As the sacrifice for the guilt of the world. The atonement made by Jesus was full of sweet incense to the Father. "Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life that I might take it again." Here all the claims of Deity were fully met, and the law was magnified, and made eternally honorable. Observe,

4. The evidences of the Father's love to Christ.

(1) See the preparatory arrangements previous to his advent in our world. A magnificent economy was set up, that might typify the person, offices, and work of the Saviour. Then a whole train of prophets, beginning with Samuel down to Malachi; all foretold his appearance, and the blessings which should attend his reign. Then, observe,

(2) The visible signs of the Father's regard, during his mission on earth. One angel announces the conception; another satisfies the afflicted spirit of Joseph; a choir of them sing the song of his incarnation; another guards his passage into Egypt. Then, behold him when he comes forth to his baptism. Jordan had often been signalized in past ages, but now i

becomes the scene of unprecedented magnificence and glory. In the midst of the water stood John and the blessed Jesus; the Saviour prays; John baptizes him; the curtains of the skies are drawn aside, and the Father proclaims from the excellent glory, "This is my beloved Son," &c. Then, go on to his transfiguration. Tabor's summit is enveloped in brightest cloud; Moses and Elias descend and converse with Jesus respecting his decease, which he should accomplish at Jerusalem; and again the attestation of the Father's love is renewed, "This is my," &c. "Hear ye him." A third time, when Jesus was troubled by the anticipations of his suffering, he said, "Father, glorify thy name," &c., John xii. 28. It did appear, indeed, in Christ's sufferings in the garden and on the cross, that God had hid his face from him. But even then, God testified to the greatness and preciousness of his Son in the overwhelming phenomena of Calvary. Yes, while men revel in cruelty and blood, when hell triumphed, the Father is seen writing his attachment to his Son, in the events of the tragic scene. He wrote it on the earth, and the earth quaked, and the rocks rent; he wrote it on the heavens, and the sun read it and rolled back his chariot wheels; he wrote it on the interior of his temple, and the veil of the temple was rent in twain; &c.; he wrote it on the sepulchres of Jerusalem, and the dead rose, and walked about in the city; he wrote it so indelibly, and in such splendid characters, that the centurion read it, and exclaimed, "Truly, this was the Son of God." Then, observe,

3. The subsequent events which evinced the Father's love to Jesus.

He did not leave his soul in Hades, nor allow his Holy One to see corruption; he raised him from the dead; exalted him to his own right hand; placed him above angels, and principalities, and powers. "Given him a name," &c. "Sit thou on my right hand," &c. He hath given unto him all rule, and power, and glory, and commandeth that "all men should honor the Son," &c.; yea, he saith, "let all the angels of God worship him." "The Father loveth the Son," &c. This leads me to notice,

II. *The Power and Authority with which he hath invested him.*

"He hath given all things," &c.

1. All things connected with this world are in his hand.

He created it, and it was created for him. Long before the creative voice of Deity broke the silence of eternity, Jesus had directed his attention to this earth, and his delights were with the sons of men. All its empires, and all its individual inhabitants, are under his providential care, &c. Finally, he shall subdue it to himself, and the song shall be heard, "The kingdoms of this world have become,' &c.

2. All things in the church are in his hand.

"He is head over all things," &c.; he is the Great Shepherd of the sheep; he is the Captain of the troops of the cross; he is the King in Zion, &c. "One is your master," &c.

3. All things in heaven are in his hand.

He is Lord of glory; Prince of glory. Isaiah saw him "high, and lifted up," &c.; King of glory, &c. He hath the keys of the heavenly world; he awards the crown; appoints the throne, pronounces the blessed; "Well done," &c.; and confesses his people, &c. "Him that overcometh," &c., see John xvi. 15, 17, 21; Matt. xxviii. 18; "All power is given," &c.

APPLICATION.

1. Learn the unspeakable dignity of Christ. What elevated views we should have of his character How great and glorious, &c.

2. The great advantages of being united to him. If we are in him, we are heirs of Christ, receiving Christ, we receive all that Christ is and has. We learn,

3. The supreme authority of Christ, in all matters of religion.

4. The inevitable doom of his incorrigible enemies. "Kiss the Son," &c.

SKETCH CXCVII.

THE THREE HEBREW WORTHIES.

"Shadrach, Meshech, and Abednego answered and said unto the king, O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer thee in this matter If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace."—*Dan.* iii. 16–18.

THE history of the Church of God has

been written in the blood of the saints. Ever since man became fallen, and allied to the prince of darkness, there has been one continual scene of conflict between the seed of the serpent, and the seed of the woman. When the world was comprised of one family, that family was divided between sin and holiness, Satan and God. And in the first human family are we to find the origin of that crimson stream, which has flowed through all ages, and in all lands. Abel leads the van among the noble army of martyrs, and Cain appears as the first persecutor unto the death, of a saint of God. From that period to this, the church has been exerting its influence to subjugate the world; and the world has been laboring to destroy the church. Our text is directly connected with one out of the many instances where persecution appeared in its severest aspect, and when love to God exposes its subjects to the loss of all things. Let me,

I. *Give you a History of the Circumstances of the Case.*

II. *The Principle by which the three Worthies were influenced, &c.*

III *The astonishing Events which followed.*

I. *Give you the History of the Circumstances of the Case.*

Among those who were carried captive to Babylon, were several of the seed royal; of these were the illustrious three worthies referred to in the text. Their original names are given, chap. i. 7. Now, these on account of their learning and wisdom, were elevated above the rest of their suffering brethren. These three, together with Daniel, had sweet fellowship with each other, and they acted in holy harmony, as the witnesses of the true God of heaven and earth. The first exhibition of their holy self-denial, was evinced in refusing to defile themselves with the luxuries of the king's table, ver. 10, &c. Afterwards, when Nebuchadnezzar had forgotten the strange dream, and required of the wise men that they should discover the dream, as well as give the interpretation, Daniel, with the three worthies, united in prayer together for God to reveal it to them. In answer to their united prayers, God did reveal it, and Daniel made it known unto the king, as described, chap. ii. 29, &c. Some time after this, the king made an image of gold, and erected it in the plain of Dura, and commanded all men at a certain period, which should be announced by the sound of music, to fall down and worship. This was demanded at the peril of life, for whoso did not was to be cast into a fiery furnace. The three Hebrews regarded not the mandate of the king, and worshipped not the image. Immediately, several of the Chaldeans, no doubt from envy, informed the king of their disobedience. They are now summoned into the royal presence, and are addressed, ver. 14, 15; to which the illustrious servants of God thus replied. See text.

The fury of the king was now excited; the cruel edict must be enforced, the sentence must be immediately executed. Several of the most powerful men were selected to see it effected; the youths were thrown into it, and the violence of the flames were such, that the officers employed perished in the act. Nebuchadnezzar witnesseth the scene, and astonished at their appearance, asks, "Did we not cast three men into the fire; and lo, I see four men loose walking, and they have no hurt, and the form of the fourth is like unto the Son of God." From thence did the king call them, and then, he issued a decree that they might worship their own God, and that all should be destroyed who spake against the God of Shadrach, &c. Now, this is the history. Let us notice,

II. *The Principle by which they were influenced.*

Why did they thus act? Wherefore did they run the risk of sacrificing their lives? Thousands would not; perhaps few others would have acted with them. Their conduct was the result of eminent piety—of religious principle. A half-hearted temporizing professor would not thus have acted.

1. They acknowledged the authority of God only, in matters of religion.

It is of the utmost importance to distinguish between things civil and religious. We are to "render unto Cæsar," &c. Conscience is God's and God's only. It might have been said, the king's authority should be respected, you are bound to obey; this is granted in all acts of a temporal nature, but where religion is concerned, we must obey God rather than man. This same principle may be applied to the wife—to the child—to the servant. God alone must be obeyed in religious things No author

ty is above his authority; no law absolute but his.

2. They dared to be singular, and to stand alone for God.

Singularity is of no value for its own sake. Persons may be singular from vanity, and to attract attention; or be singularly wicked. But there is religious singularity. "Ye are not of the world." We are to take up the cross and follow him; to come out of the world, &c. Now, they might have said, who are you to oppose the great mass of the people; you, young men —to stand out against the great and learned, the aged, &c. Yet these young men dared to stand alone. What courage it would require!

3 They dared to risk all for the sake of a good conscience.

Had they been willing, they might have said thus, "We will give the homage of the body, but our hearts shall not worship; we are greatly indebted to the king, we are not capable of disobeying him; it is only one act, God will overlook it." Or perhaps have reasoned as we have heard religionists, "We will go so far with them, and perhaps, in return, they will go some length with us;" no, they had one object to secure, and what was it—a good conscience—integrity of soul; and for it they dared to risk, what? reputation—all temporal good — liberty — yea, life itself, 'Counted not their lives dear."

4. They could trust all they possessed with God.

Mark their expressions; "Our God," &c.; they knew their relationship to him: "can deliver;" yes, he is almighty, none like the God of Jeshurun: "and will;" he loves us, and he has often exercised miraculous influence for those who love him; he has divided seas; caused the sun to stand still, and the moon in the valley of Aijalon. "At any rate, if we die, and are consumed to ashes, let it be so; death will be our gain, and so we will die rather than worship thy gods." Observe,

III. *The astonishing Events which followed.*

1. The judgment of God upon the officers who executed it.

It is probable these would rejoice to be thus employed; but mark, their service was attended with loss of life. How wretched are those who are employed to execute sinful and wicked appointments!

2. The striking interposition on behalf of the noble-minded servants of God.

The fire is restrained, and they walk in the midst of it unconsumed. Moses once beheld a bush enveloped in flames, yet unburnt; here is its antitype literally realized. Isaiah had recorded the promise; "Through the waters," &c.; here it is fulfilled to the very letter. The Son of God was with them; he appeared in their extremity, and they had sweet fellowship with him in the flaming furnace.

3. The God of heaven was glorified.

Glorified he had been in the profession of these young men; glorified in their self-denials. And now he glorifies his own faithfulness and power, in delivering them from death. How illustrated is that passage, "He that loseth his life," &c. How abashed must the idolatrous multitude have been; how astonished the wise men; how struck the Babylonian monarch; how rejoiced the true servants of God

APPLICATION.

Learn,

1. The demands of true religion; the consecration of all our powers to God. It demands these under all circumstances and cases; not only when it can be done without loss, but when it exposes to the loss of all things.

2. What a reproof the subject administers to all who temporize and vacillate respecting religion. One loves the idea of religion, but he cannot bear the sneers of friends; another, but he cannot forego a little gain from Sunday trading; another, but he will have religion of the most respectable kind, the religion of the mass, especially of the mass of the rich; another, but only so long as sacrifices are not demanded.

3. What encouragement to decision and consistency! "Whoso findeth his life, shall lose it." God can deliver; God will reward; eternity will compensate; give up all for Christ, and you shall inherit all things.

SKETCH CXCVIII

THE LORD'S SUPPER.

"And he took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them, saying, This is my body

which is given for you, this do in remembrance of me."—*Luke* xxii. 19

Our subject is connected with the most affecting part of the history of the Son of God. He had accomplished all his ministerial work on earth; he had exclaimed, "Father, I have finished the work," &c. He was now waiting as the atoning sacrifice, ready to be offered up for the sin of the world; his hour of sorrow had arrived; the period for this baptism of blood had come; the redeeming act for man's salvation was now to be performed. This season of intense suffering he introduces by holding intimate communion with his disciples. The night of his apprehension had set upon the land; Jesus and his beloved band are sitting around the paschal table, and then he looks upon his chosen servants, and addresses them thus, "With desire," &c.; "Then, taking bread," &c.; "He gave thanks," &c. Let us notice,

I. *The Ordinance itself.*

It is the receiving of bread and wine in the remembrance of the Lord Jesus Christ. The bread reminds us of weakness and dependence, and the goodness of God in giving us the staff of life. What bread is to the body, Christ is to the soul. He is the true bread of life, &c. The breaking of the bread reminds us of the wounds and bruises of the body of Jesus, and of the racking tortures of his holy soul, for the redemption of our souls. See Isai. liii. The one bread for all who sit at Christ's table, reminds us of the one and the only one Christ for all believers. "No other name," &c. The wine is the emblem of the blood of Jesus, which was shed for the redemption of the soul. "Not redeemed with corruptible," &c. See ver. 20. Now, in this we are taught our sinfulness, and condemned estate; guilty, polluted, and under the curse. Also, the only remedy for that state, "The blood of Christ cleanseth," &c., and that alone, &c. Also, the necessity of its appropriation: We must be personally partakers of its efficacious influence. We must come to it, feel it, &c. Now, this is a concise and simple view of the ordinance itself. Notice,

II. *Its Characteristics.*

1. It is a Divine ordinance.

Here is its institution. That it did not merely refer to the apostles, is evident from the practices of the first Christians as given in the "Acts" Jesus solemnly established it in person, and enjoined it in the affectionate words of the text: "This do in remembrance of me." It has the signet of authority upon it, the impress and superscription of the Son of God.

2. It is a perpetual ordinance

As it recognises the death of Jesus, as a past act for our sins, so it looks forward to his second coming; and it is to be continued until he shall finish his great mediatorial work, 1 Cor. xi. 26.

3. It is a binding and obligatory ordinance.

Christ established nothing in vain. All he commanded, we are to be taught, that we may obey in all things, Matt. xxviii. 20 If not binding, what command is so? If not binding on all then on none!

4. It should be a frequent ordinance.

Ought we to have a Lord's-day, without a Lord's Supper, without the sacrifice being laid on the altar of the sanctuary? Early Christians, at least received it weekly. So it was in use for several of the first centuries of the Christian era. See Acts ii. 41, &c., xx. 6. Paul arrived on Monday, and remained till the next Lord's day, &c. Christ's death and cross must be elevated above all things. Christ's death is the very soul of redemption. The life-blood of salvation. We cannot meditate, or be too intimate with it. We need it every day, every moment, &c Frequency in reading, worship, and prayer, always profitable. So also in this ordinance, testimonies of the most eminent Christians in its favor.

III. *The Spirit in which it should be observed.*

1. In the spirit of deep humility of mind.

As sinners—as utterly unworthy of so great a sacrifice. As living monuments of God's forbearance and mercy.

2. In the spirit of grateful love to Jesus.

"We love him because he first," &c Here is the evidence; here, the astounding proofs; here, we hear him address us, "This is my body," &c. "This is my blood," &c.

3. In the spirit of faith.

"Draw near in faith," &c. "Without faith," &c.

4. In the spirit of love to all mankind.

Here, Christ says by his example, "Love your enemies." "Bless," &c. He says

especially, "A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another."

5. In the spirit of joyous hope of joining Christ and his church in heaven.

Christ is gone to his Father's house, and there he receives from the church on earth, his people, that they may be with him forever and ever.

IV. *The Advantages arising from Obedience to this Command of Christ's.*

1. The soul will be strengthened.

"They that wait upon the Lord," &c.

2. Christ will be increasingly precious.

The more we know, and hear, and meditate, &c., the more we shall admire, and love him.

3. Holiness will be increased.

Sins pardoned. Satan vanquished. World overcome, &c. Meetness for heaven increased.

4. Heaven will be desired.

"Good to be here." "This the house of God," &c. "And if our fellowship," &c. Frequent communion on earth will lead us to desire perpetual communion in heaven.

APPLICATION.

1. Address regular communicants. Come in a right spirit. Be watchful, humble, prayerful, &c.

2. Address irregular communicants. Why so? It is disobedience, inconsistency, injurious to yourselves, church, world.

3. Those who never commune at all. (1) The conscientiously doubtful. Do you hate sin? Believe in Christ, &c. Are you willing to obey him? Then draw near, &c. (2) Those who are really unfit for the Lord's table, are also unfit for death, judgment, eternity. Do not reject the gospel. Do not slight Christ. Do not destroy your souls. Do not throw away heaven. Do not perish in your sins. Repent, believe. Unite with his people. Live to Christ that you may die to Christ, and be his forever.

SKETCH CXCIX.

ON SUPPLICATION, ETC., FOR ALL MEN.

"I exhort, therefore, that first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men."—1 *Tim.* ii. 1.

We have no subject so frequently brought before us in the Holy Scriptures, as that of prayer. The reason is obvious, It is the very life of experimental religion. It is an exercise, which should form the basis of all duties. It is the procurer of all blessings; the averter of all dangers; and our solace in all distresses. Prayer may either be the silent address of the heart, or the express utterance of the lips. It may be for ourselves, the church, or for the world at large. At present, we have to do with the public prayer of God's house. Here is the will of God given to us by his servant and apostle Paul, to Timothy, his son in the gospel. "I exhort," &c. Notice,

I. *The varied Form of Expression the Apostle adopts.*

II. *The Extent.*

III. *The Grounds on which the Exhortation may be urged.*

I. *The varied Form of Expression the Apostle adopts.*

1 Supplications.

Seems to be nearly synonymous with the next term employed. But it is most likely intended for that particular part of prayer which has for its object the removal of evil, or preservation from it.

2. Prayers.

May refer to petitions for positive blessings upon men, either as it respects their bodies or souls, either for time or eternity

3. Intercessions.

To the employment of our influence with God, as his friends and children. Hence, Christ is the great intercessor of his church. Abraham and Moses, also thus interceded. Hence, God told Jeremiah not to intercede for Judah. See Jer. xv 16.

4. Thanksgiving.

Here we are called, not only to feel for all men, but to rejoice in their success. To bless God for his general goodness, or his providential interposition in behalf of men. "To rejoice with them that rejoice." If we love all men, we shall be glad in their prosperity.

II. *The Extent of the Exercise enjoined.*

"For all men." Let us just glance at a classification which may assist us. There are,

1. Our immediate relatives.

These especially should share our kindest regards. Parents for children, sisters and brethren for each other, &c.

2. Our spiritual associates.

These are spiritual relatives. Belong to the same family, table, &c Fellow-pilgrims.

3. There is Christ's universal church.

Scattered over the face of the wide world. Of every Christian name, &c. "Grace be with all who love," &c.

4. There is the nation in which we dwell.

Religion enforces patriotism. Sanctifies it, &c. Moses was a patriot. So was Nehemiah. So was David, Paul, &c. Hence kings, magistrates, and rulers, must have a place, &c. Ver. 2.

5. Then there is the world at large.

The universal family of man. Men of all colors, climes, tongues, &c. Men of all classes, and degrees. Not one man must be excluded. "All men."

III. *The Grounds on which the Exhortation may be urged.*

1. On the ground of one common humanity. Acts xvii. 26. All distinctions are of a minor character. But one race of human beings. All God's creatures, and our relatives.

2. On the ground of one common providence.

God is the great Father of all the human family. He who feeds us, and clothes us, &c. Does so for them. All liable to the same providential calamities.

3. On the grounds of God's good-will to all men.

Ver. 4, "He is good to all, and his tender mercies," &c. He desires the salvation of all. "As I live," &c.

4. On the ground of Christ's universal death for all.

Ver. 6, "For this we know, and testify," &c. "For he is the propitiation," &c. If Christ died for all, shall we not pray for all?

5. On the grounds of the divine approval of this exercise.

Ver. 3, We shall so far resemble God. Enjoy his favor and blessing.

APPLICATION.

1. Let me ask you, Do you merely hear, or do you join in public prayer?

2. Have we not lost the fervor of the primitive Christians in this exercise? Where is the sign that the people are praying with the person publicly engaged? Let me refer you to three cases. See 1 Chron. xvi. 35; Ps. cvi. 48 1 Cor. xiv. 16.

3. We cannot thus pray for all men without possessing the spirit of Christian benevolence.

4. Some here, perhaps never pray for themselves. Let it be said of you, as of Saul. "Behold," &c.

SKETCH CC

JUSTIFICATION

"And by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses."—*Acts* xiii. 39.

A CLEAR acquaintance with the nature of true religion is of the utmost importance. It is important to the true Christian; for in this way only can he have comfortable assurance of his state and safety. It is important to the inquirer after salvation, as in this way he will be able to know the truth as it is in Jesus. And how is this correct knowledge of true religion to be obtained? By a close acquaintance with the word of God. Here, genuine piety is plainly described; the way to heaven clearly drawn out. Now, it is obvious, that genuine religion includes justification, regeneration, adoption, and sanctification. To these essential parts of evangelical religion, we propose to call your serious attention. The first in order is presented to us in the text, which is justification. Notice,

I. *What is implied in Justification.*

II. *What is included in Justification.*

III. *The Medium, &c. of Justification.*

I. *What is implied in Justification.*

It is implied,

1. That man is chargeable with transgression.

Now, this is true both of the heart and life of man. The imaginations of the heart of man are evil, &c. "The heart is deceitful," &c. See Job's account, xv. 14. See David's account, Ps. xiv. 2, &c. See Isaiah's account, liii. 6. See Paul's account, Rom iii. 19–23.

2. The transgression of man exposes him to punishment.

Sin is opposed to God's holy nature Violation of his holy laws; and therefore exposes to his holy displeasure. Hence the statements of the Divine word. The

soul that sinneth, &c. Though he is merciful, &c., yet he will by no means clear he guilty, &c. "The wages of sin," &c.

II. *Then, what is included in Justification?*

The term is sometimes interchangeable with pardon or remission of sin. (See ext.) It is the opposite of guilt and condemnation.

1. It is to stand free from charge, and as such, free from condemnation, and danger of punishment.

Now, in a court of justice, a man may be justified upon the ground of innocence, when he can vindicate himself, &c. Or,

2. Upon the ground of compensation.

When he has met the demand of the penalty. Now, the sinner cannot be justified in either of these senses. He is guilty. Eternal death is the penalty. That will never be paid, &c. So that we must now pass on.

III. *To the Means and Medium of a Sinner's Justification.*

Now, in the text, there is,

1. The negative view given.

We cannot be justified by the law of Moses. Not by the ceremonial law of Moses. See Heb. x. 4. Neither by the moral law of Moses.

(1) The moral law demands perfect obedience. No man ever yielded it.

(2) It does not acknowledge repentance. Do, and live; Sin and die. Seizes by the throat, &c.

(3) Its threatening cannot be repealed. Else, what becomes of the moral character of the Lawgiver. His righteousness in giving such a law. His purity in allowing evil. His truth in violating his word. See Rom. iii. 20; Gal. ii. 16. Now, observe,

2. The positive means and medium of justification asserted.

"By him," &c. Christ is the meritorious medium of justification. Now, he met all the demands of that law which condemned the sinner.

(1) The law required a holy nature—a nature which approved of it, loved it, &c. Christ possessed such a nature. Holy, without spot—the law of God was in his heart.

(2) The law required perfect obedience. He obeyed it both in the spirit and letter. Magnified it, &c. The law embodied, &c.

(3) It required an atonement for man's guilt. Satisfaction for his crimes. He paid the demands. See Rom. v. 8; Eph i. 7; 1 Pet. iii. 18. "For Christ also," &c. The dignity of Christ's person, and the preciousness of his blood, amply satisfied all the claims of the justice of God.

3. Mark the instrumental medium of justification.

By faith, "all that believe," &c. Now God requires the sinner to comply with his Divine appointments, in obtaining the benefits of Christ's death. Not works. These, he has not. Faith, a cordial belief and trust in what Christ has effected. Now, the fact of Christ's death does not alter the truth of my being a sinner. Nor does it make my sin a trifling matter. Nor does it free me from the possibility of being punished; but it opens a way to the favor of God, and makes my salvation possible and easy. Justice addresses me, pay, &c I appeal to Christ. I lay hold of him. "'Tis just the sentence," &c. Now, did I not rest on Christ, and believe in him, what can I reply to Justice. I am doubly condemned. The law condemns me as a sinner. The gospel as an unbeliever. One for crime; the other for unbelief. Now, you will see I am justified, not for faith, but by it, for Christ's sake. Observe,

4. The extent of Justification.

(1) Justification from all charges. "From all things," &c. The law made no provision for presumptuous sins. Now, this is the extent. "All manner of sin," &c. However deeply vile. Red, &c. Numerous, aggravated, continued, &c. All blotted out as a cloud.

(2) Justification to all believers. No respect of persons with God. All men guilty; all condemned; all redeemed; all invited; all welcome; and all may believe.

APPLICATION.

Learn,

1. The great importance of Justification. First great blessing. Basis of all. Without it, Guilty. Wrath of God.

2. The fallacy of eternal Justification.

3. The gracious way of Justification, by faith. God will not justify us in any other way.

4. Does not militate against good works—good works in their right place. As the fruit, &c.

5. Evidence of Justification. Love to Christ. Peace with God, &c.

SKETCH CCI.

REGENERATION

"Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God," &c.—*John* iii. 3–8.

We have previously considered the doctrine of Justification, and have endeavored to show that Justification consisted in being considered righteous before God, and being dealt with as such. Now, Justification is entirely a change of state; it has nothing to do with our nature. A man, by prodigality, becomes greatly indebted. It is paid, and he is justified. This will not prevent him immediately acting in a similar manner, &c. A rebel may be pardoned, nd yet have a rebel's heart A change of nature is as essential to man, as a change of condition. Now, this is effected in Regeneration, which is the subject for our present consideration. Let us consider, the nature, means, evidences, and importance of Regeneration.

I. *The Nature of Regeneration.*

Or, to be born again. Now, it will be clear it does not refer to natural things, but to spiritual. Various erroneous notions have been formed of it. Hence, we would remark,

(1) That the renunciation of error, and the reception of the truth is not Regeneration.

(2) External reformation is not Regeneration. A man may become industrious, sober, and honest, and not be regenerated.

(3) General morality of conduct is not Regeneration. Else, the young man in the gospel.

(4) A flaming profession of religion is not Regeneration. Else, the Pharisees, Nicodemus, and Saul. We may have internal raptures; we may be extremely noisy and boisterous. "Lo, here is Christ," &c. We may be apparently zealous as Jehu. "Come, see my zeal." We may be as self-complacent as the Jews. "We have Abraham for our Father, &c. The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord are we." To the whole of this, Christ says, 'The kingdom of God cometh not by observation. The kingdom of God is not in word, but in power. The kingdom of God is within you" Regeneration is the spiritual change of the heart. The renewal of the mind. The restoration of the image of God in the soul. See some of the metaphorical descriptions of it. It is a translation from darkness to light. From the kingdom of Satan, into the kingdom of God's dear son. It is a resurrection. "You hath he quickened," &c. See also 1 Pet. i. 3. In the text it is a new birth. As by the first birth we become partakers of human nature, so, by the second, of the divine nature. As the first introduces us into the natural world, so, the second, into the spiritual world—the kingdom of grace. As in the first birth, we bear the image and features of our earthly parents, so, by the second, we bear the image of the Second Adam—the Lord from heaven. There is, however, a blessed disparity between the first and second birth. By the first birth, we enter upon the troubles and afflictions of earth; by the second, upon the blessings and privileges of the heirs of heaven. By the first birth, we became the heirs of death, by the second, heirs of life and immortality. Now this change which is effected in Regeneration,

1. Is a complete change.

Look at the understanding now illuminated; affections now fixed upon God, judgment influenced by the truth; conscience now pacified. Not that any faculty is destroyed, or any new one formed; but all the old ones are renewed and spiritualized.

2. It is an instantaneous change.

Not that there is no preparatory work. The incorruptible seed of the word of God must be sown in the soil of the heart. There it must germinate, &c. The truth is one great instrumental means of regenerating the heart; and this must be brought to bear upon our minds, 1 Pet. i. 23. Yet, there is an instant when we cease to be the children of the wicked one, &c. When we enter into the new spiritual state of being. We may not know the place, nor the exact time, but our spiritual existence is the proof of its reality.

3. It is a divine change.

God is the author of it; God is the fountain of all life; hence, said to be "born of God." "Blessed be the God and Father,' &c., "who hath begotten us again." It is not natural to any man; it is not learning, or education, or parental influence that can effect it; it is beyond an angel's power

'God who commanded the light," &c., 2 Cor. iv. 6; Eph. ii. 10.

4. It is a mysterious change.

Being internal it does not fall beneath the observation of the senses. No eye sees the wonderful process but the eye of God. The Saviour refers for an illustration to the wind; "the wind bloweth," &c. How fine and subtle are the particles of air; we feel it upon us, and are conscious of it, but cannot tell "whence it came," &c.

5. It is a change with which the body is connected, and harmonizes

"Born of water and the Spirit." Now, respecting this, parties have gone into two extremes; many have taught that baptism is regeneration, the Church of England expressly teaches this; others again say that baptism is merely a sign or shadow of regeneration. Now, the truth seems to me different to both of these views. Man is composed of two parts, body and spirit; the body is not man, nor yet is the soul man, both of them united form man; both involved in vice; both employed while in sin; both are in the service of the devil; God demands both; in regeneration both must have a part; hence, the Spirit must renew our spirits; and the body must be baptized in water to signify, 1st, That as Christ's redeemed property it is now given unto him visibly, &c.; and 2dly, That as by baptism we profess to be buried with Christ, so also we profess to arise in hope of a resurrection from the dead. See Rom. vi. 3, 4. Before baptism, we profess to put off the old man and his deeds, and when baptized, we profess to have put on Christ, the new man, &c. Now, scriptural regeneration includes, therefore, both body and soul; see this fully borne out by referring to Heb. x. 19. It will be obvious from this, that persons may be regenerated in spirit and not in body; so in body and not in spirit. Now some affect to treat the body with contempt; before this is done, remember the Son of God dwelt in flesh; has taken it up to heaven, and angels and holy spirits bow before it. Remember also, the apostle says, "Know ye not that your bodies are temples of the Holy Ghost." And finally, that the body is to be raised again, to share in the fulness of redemption, &c., forever. How plain, then, the meaning of Christ, "Born of water and the Spirit." The evidences— necessity of the change must be deferred.

APPLICATION.

1. The subject is worthy of careful scriptural examination.

2. Of solemn personal examination. Let us guard against counterfeits; let us avoid apathy, &c. Be satisfied with nothing less than the experience of the change itself.

SKETCH CCII.

OF REGENERATION.

PART II.

"Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily I say unto thee, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God," &c.—*John* iii. 3–8.

We have previously noticed the nature of regeneration, as consisting in an entire change and renewal of the heart. The change we described as complete, divine, and instantaneous, mysterious, and with which the body is connected and harmonizes. Let us consider,

II. *The Means of Regeneration.*

1. Now the efficient means is the Spirit of God.

Hence, it is called being born of the Spirit. "You hath he quickened," &c. It is the peculiar prerogative of God, by his Holy Spirit, to regenerate the heart. Then,

2. The instrumental means are the word of God.

See 1 Pet. i. 23; Jas. i. 18. Hence, ministers of the gospel, by the use of the word of God, are said to raise up seed to Christ Paul says of the Corinthians, "I have begotten you through the gospel." So also. Onesimus, whom he says he had begotten in his bonds. Now it is only by the reception of the word of God, that it can benefit our souls; and this is generally of the word preached, "For faith cometh by hearing," &c. Hence, God is the source, and the gospel the instrument of renewing the heart. Here we may see how it may be said, we are saved by God, by the word, and by faith. A man is drowning, a person who sees his condition throws him a rope, and he lays hold of it, and is delivered. Now, it is easy to see how the man, the rope, and the laying hold of the rope, saved him; one man who witnesses it, says, "I saw a man drowning, but a person saved him;" another says, "I saw a

man drowning, but a rope saved him;" a third says, "I saw a man drowning, but he saved himself by laying hold of a rope." Apply this to God, the word, and faith. Notice,

III. *The Evidences of Regeneration.*

The apostle gives us a very general proof, "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature." The evidences are the very opposite of those which distinguish the sinner. Now, we might expatiate on each of the signs of the new creature, but we may choose the apostle's words, just quoted as a text, and then we may show in what respects the man in Christ is a new creature. Now, we have four signs of regeneration laid down in the word of God.

1. Faith. 1 John v. 1.

2. Nonconformity to the world, or rather victory over it.

1 John v. 4. Formerly belonging to it; now delivered from it. Not of the world, as Christ was not of it. World under the feet, &c.

3. Righteousness of life.

See 1 John v. 18, ver. 3, does not mean absolute purity and perfect obedience. "For if we say that we have no sin," &c. Christ has taught us to pray to God to forgive us daily, but there is a great difference in sin being our burden, and pleasure; in cherishing evil, and striving against it; in being its free and willing slave, and it being our grief, and greatest affliction; between sin reigning, and being in a dying state.

4. Love to God, and the brethren.

See 1 John iv. 7–20, v. 1–3, 10. Where these four signs exist, we have indubitable proof of regeneration. Then, let us consider,

IV. *The Importance of Regeneration.*

1. It is essential to the enjoyment of the favor of God.

God cannot approve of the image of the wicked one; he hates sin, and all its effects, &c. "God is angry," &c. "The face of the Lord is set against them that do wickedness," &c. "But saints are lovely in his sight." It is only when he sees reflected his own image, that he can smile upon it, and pronounce it very good.

2. It is essential to communion with God.

Light cannot have fellowship with darkness; sin with holiness. God is a spirit, and we must be born of the Spirit, before we can hold fellowship with God.

3. It is essential to our interests in the promises of the covenant.

Promises are given to children. Estate is for the children, &c. "If children, then heirs," &c.

4. It is essential to true membership with his church on earth.

Without it, we are illegitimate, not sons Not truly in the church; for all who are so, are born into it. May be outer-court worshippers, &c.

5. It is essential to our entrance into heaven.

Without it cannot enter. No title or meetness for it. Now, let us glance at ver. 5, and see if we can explain and illustrate it. It doubtless refers to baptism. Now Christ's church on earth is both visible and invisible. We become members of the invisible, by being born of the Spirit. But this is only known to God and ourselves. We, therefore, become members of the visible church, by a visible act, and that is baptism; hence, for hundreds of years after Christ, the church never thought of a person being a member, until he had been baptized.

APPLICATION.

Learn,

1. That genuine religion must be based on an entire change of heart. Heart of stone must be taken away, &c.

2. Let us cultivate the evidences of regeneration. Follow the Lord, as dear children.

3. Be anxious to grow in grace; to rise in the divine life, &c.; to aim at the stature of a perfect man in Christ Jesus.

4. Impress upon the unconverted the absolute necessity of the change

SKETCH CCIII

THE SUFFICIENCY OF REVELATION

"And he said unto them, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead."—*Luke* xvi. 31.

SCRIPTURE generally details matter of fact. Doctrines demanding our faith, or duties requiring our practical regard; hence the events of past ages lie unfolded before us. Hence too, the truths and laws of God

are made known; and thus, a luminous pathway is opened to the realms of eternal glory. There is not much written respecting the eternal world; enough indeed to excite the warmest desires and hopes for heaven, and to produce the greatest fears respecting the wrath to come. The text, however, draws aside the curtain of futurity; brings us into close contact with heaven and hell, and permits us to hear the conversation between two of the disembodied spirits, the one glorified, and the other lost. Now, all this is not to excite our curiosity, but to instruct our minds, and we would not have selected this passage, had it not contained a solemn and weighty truth, that if men are not convinced by the word of God, "neither would they be persuaded," &c. Here, the writings of Moses and the prophets are described as being every way sufficient to persuade men to repent; if so, how much more the gospels and the epistles of the New Testament. Now, we have the completed will of God; the meridian light of revelation. Let us endeavor to prove and illustrate the proposition of the text.

I. *A Messenger from the Dead would be required to prove the Divinity of his Mission.*

If he did this, so have Moses and the prophets, Christ and the apostles. Did a messenger from the dead appear, you would require to know from whence and whom he came; how would you know that he was not a deceiving, lying spirit; did he convince you that God sent him, then you might hear and believe him; but what evidence could he give you, which the Scriptures do not furnish that they have come from God? Let me just advert,

1. To the grand and sublime truths of revelation.

2. To the fulfilment of their predictions.

3. To their power over the heart and life of man.

How they have civilized, moralized, made men holy, and useful in the world, blessings to society; converted men from being like demons, to resemble angels, &c.

II. *A Messenger from the Dead could not deliver more important Truths than are revealed in the Scriptures.*

What could he tell us of God, &c.; of creation; of man; his original state; the fall, &c.; of sin, its evil effects, &c.; of redemption; love of God; substitution of Christ &c.; freeness of Divine mercy, &c., of the way of salvation; repentance faith in Jesus, &c.; of eternity; the joys of heaven; or the woes of hell, &c "Therefore, if they hear not," &c.

III. *A Messenger from the Dead could not use stronger Arguments, or urge more powerful Motives than the Scriptures furnish.*

Should he exhibit the dire effects of sin; have we not read, and do we not see these in the word of God? Should he speak of the shortness of life, the uncertainty of every thing on earth; are we not aware of it? Of the solemnity of death; who denies it? Of the terrors of the judgment-day; could his descriptions exceed those in the Scriptures, &c.? Of the horrors of hell, or the joys of heaven, &c.; "yet all these motives are addressed to us already, so that if they hear not," &c.

IV. *A Messenger from the Dead could not remove the Impediments to the Sinner's salvation.*

Men are not so much indisposed to religion, because they do not think it true, as because they do not like its principles. Some few profess to reject it for want of evidence, but the great mass never reflect upon its evidences at all. That ambitious man dislikes religion because it enjoins humility and self-abasement; that pleasure-taker, because it urges self-denial; that miser, because it urges goodness and liberality; that revengeful man, because it urges mercy and forgiveness; in short, that sinful man, because it requires holiness of heart and life, &c. Now, a messenger from the dead could not remove these impediments; the heart would still be carnal, &c., despite any message that could be delivered. Let us try to conceive of the effects which a messenger from the dead would produce. Suppose, at midnight, a spirit, arrayed in the habiliments of the eternal world, should draw aside your curtain, and address you in sepulchral sounds; tell you of God, of heaven, of hell, of eternity, of time's brevity, death's approach, &c., and should then say, "Repent and believe the gospel," what effect would it have? Alarm, confusion, dread; that night might be sleepless, &c.; a few days, &c., and all the effects would be erased. Well, then, you say, let the messenger appear again, but in this way, all the effects would cease, and familiarity would produce total indifference and neglect.

V. *Men have been totally uninfluenced by the most astonishing Miracles.*

See Pharaoh, and the miracles of Egypt; see the Israelites, and the miracles at the Red Sea, &c., at the foot of Sinai; see the Jews and Christ's miracles, lepers cleansed, blind receive sight, devils dispossessed, miracles at Christ's death, yet only one of the immense multitude was convinced, &c. What do we learn from this? that if ordinary means fail, so also will means the most extraordinary.

VI *Persons have come from the Dead, and yet Men have not been convinced.*

Centurion's daughter is dead, Christ brings her to life, but the Jews still reject Christ; widow's son is being borne to burial, Christ stops the bier, and says, "Young man, arise," and he sits up, &c.; we do not read that any were convinced; Lazarus is brought back after he had been sepulchred, yet the Jews were more prejudiced against Christ than ever, and sought to kill Lazarus; then, last of all, Christ raised himself, the soldiers fell as dead men to the ground, &c.; now, surely, these would be at once his disciples; no, they take a bribe, and flatly deny his resurrection, &c.

VII *The Word of God has proved its Sufficiency in every Age and Country in the World.*

Observe, Peter's first sermon, see Acts iii.; "three thousand souls," &c.; so wherever the apostles went; so now, how were you converted? by miracle, no, by the word of God, and God's word is his own power, &c; oh yes, and this word shall be preached as a witness, &c. The word of the Lord shall run and be glorified.

APPLICATION.

Learn, the preciousness of the gospel of Christ. To have a chart so plain, so full, so efficient. Do not expect God to adopt any other means for your salvation; you have Moses and the prophets, Christ and the apostles. Do not expect supernatural impulse; do not wait for extraordinary signs, &c. "For if the word spoken by angels," &c., Heb. ii. 2, 3. And if it were afforded, "If ye hear not Moses and the prophets," &c.

SKETCH CCIV

ADOPTION

"The adoption of sons."—*Gal.* iv. 5.

It is not uncommon, when standing by the side of a fine flowing river, to be anxious to ascertain its source, and to know all concerning its progress. Salvation may be thus likened to a stream, and in divine revelation we are instructed in all that relates to its rise, and channel, and course; the love of God is its source; the merits of Jesus its channel; and in its career, there is, first, the redemption of the world; then the justification of the believer; then the regeneration of those who are justified; afterwards, the adoption of the regenerate into the divine family; then their growth and advancement in sanctification; and finally, the stream goes to its native source, and terminates in the ocean of the presence of God, where there are pleasures for evermore. This morning we have got to that part of the saving stream denominated adoption. Let us consider,

I. *In what it consists.*
II. *Its Signs.*
III. *Its Privileges.*

Notice,

I. *In what does Adoption consist.*

Adoption is the translation of a person out of one family into another, and was often practised, both by the Romans and the Grecians, who, when childless, adopted some other child, and gave it the family name, and also, the title to the family inheritance. Such is natural adoption, and spiritual adoption is that act of grace by which God takes the children of the wicked one out of the world, and makes them the sons and daughters of his spiritual family. Now, the points of resemblance between natural and spiritual adoption are these,

(1) In adoption, we cease to have our former name, and are designated after the name of God, who adopted us; then sinners, now saints; then enemies, now reconciled; then aliens and rebels, now brought nigh, and the friends of God.

(2) In adoption, we change our abode. Once in the world, in the kingdom of darkness, in a far country; now in the church, in the kingdom of God's dear Son, in the household of faith, and family of heaven

(3) We change our costume. Conform to the family dress. Prodigal ceased to wear his rags, had the best robe; so believers put on the Lord Jesus Christ, have he joyful garments of salvation. Observe, next, the points of difference between natural and spiritual adoption

(1) Natural adoption was to supply a family defect. Because there was no son. God had hosts of sons. The angels of the Lord are thousands of thousands. He could raise of the stones, children to Abraham.

(2) Natural adoption was only of sons. But God says to all believers, I will be a Father to you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord; there is no distinction of color, or age, or sex; neither male nor female, bond nor free; Christ is all, and in all.

(3) In natural adoption there was only a change of condition. The child never became really the son of the adopter; but God makes his children partakers of his own nature, and imprints his own image; they are as really and truly his spiritual children by regeneration, as they are his creatures by creation.

(4) In natural adoption, only one was adopted; but God adopts multitudes. His seed shall be as numerous as the sands on the sea-shore. See Heb. ii. 10.

(5) In natural adoption, only temporal advantages were derived, but in spiritual, the blessings are eternal, even life for evermore. Observe, then,

II. *The signs of Adoption.*

Now, these signs are of two kinds,

1. Internal.

See chap. iv. 6; Rom. viii. 14–16. Now, the Spirit will produce within us, peace of mind. "The fruit of the Spirit is peace," &c. Comfort of heart; hence, he is styled the Comforter; solid comfort he imparts to the soul; hence, we read of the Christian's walking in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, Acts ix. 31; spiritual joy, see Gal. v. 22; 1 Pet. i. 8. Now observe,

2. The external signs of adoption.

I shall confine myself to three things.

(1) Language. We shall speak the language of the kingdom of Canaan; our speech will betray us, this we cannot avoid; our conversation will be such as becometh the gospel of Christ.

(2) Profession. We shall appear as the sons of the family of God; have the family badge; be enrolled in the family book; be found in the family circle, and sit at the family table. Jehovah will be our God, Jesus our salvation; and his people our friends.

(3) Obedience. God's family has its laws, its specific rules for the government of itself, and for the direction of its conduct towards those who are without. "Ye are my friends," &c. "If ye love me," &c. Notice,

III. *Its Privileges.*

1. Deliverance from all the miseries of our pristine state.

Poverty, rags, misery, ruin.

2. Investiture into all the benefits of Christ's family on earth.

The supply of all our need; constant care and protection of God; a right of access to God at all times and places.

3. A title to the celestial inheritance which Christ has bought and prepared for all who love him.

See ver. 7. "Heirs of God!" how great how sublime, how vast, how inconceivable, how eternal; heirs of God's name, nature, favor, heaven, glory; what a fund of blessedness! "The adoption of sons."

APPLICATION.

1. Learn the essential importance of this blessing. What would pardon and regeneration be without it? God forgives, changes, and then takes us into his family.

2. Let us seek the good of his family. We are in it, to labor as well as enjoy; let our hearts be set upon its happiness and welfare.

3. Invite strangers to become the sons and heirs of God.

SKETCH CCV.

SANCTIFICATION

"And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly."—1 *Thess.* v. 23.

PREVIOUSLY, we have considered, Justification, Regeneration, and Adoption. By the one, guilt is forgiven; by the second, the heart is renewed; and, by the third, we are received into the family of God Now, we are to consider the subject of Sanctification. In so doing, we purpose

to notice the nature, mode, characteristics, and importance of Sanctification.

I. *The Nature of Sanctification.*

Now, the word sanctify, signifies, to separate from that which is common, and to set apart to that which is holy. Hence, we read of the sanctification of places, and things, and persons. The tabernacle—its furniture, Exod. xxx. 29. The priests, and the people also, Exod. xxviii. 46; xix. 10. Hence, we are called to sanctify the name of God, Deut. v. 12. Now, spiritual sanctification has two parts:—

1. The mortifying and overcoming the evils of our nature.

Now, this is clearly set forth by the apostle, Gal. i. 20. This is also expressed, Rom. viii. 12, 13. And it is exhibited in all its force in the experience of the renewed man, who is struggling against sin. See Rom. vii. 14 to end. Now, it has been said, that this applies to the penitent, and not to the believer. Impossible. See ver. 22. Then one part of sanctification is the resistance of evil—the inward conflict against sin. Sanctification,

2. Is the consecration of the believer to that which is holy.

The life of God is implanted in the soul in regeneration; and sanctification is the perpetuation of this life. The dedication of the soul, to fear, to love, and to serve God. Now, thus sanctification includes, holiness of heart; spiritual habits and tempers; and the exercise of the soul in the duties of practical godliness. Let us observe,

II. *The Mode of Sanctification.*

Now, sanctification is attributed,

1. To the blood of Christ.

Now, the blood of Jesus is the meritorious cause of all our privileges and blessings. Redemption, peace, and holiness, are all attributed to it. By the shedding of his blood, all the means of our holiness have been obtained. Hence, sanctification is attributed,

2. To the Spirit of God.

2 Thess. ii. 13; Rom. xv. 16. Now, the Holy Spirit is the great effective agent who dwells in believers, and carries on the work of sanctification, &c. As such, he is compared to water, John vii. 37–39. Also, to wind, John iii.; and to fire, as such, he rested on the apostles, &c. "Quench not," &c As water cleanses the body, and as wind purifies the air, and as fire refines the metal, so the Holy Spirit sanctifies the heart, &c. Sanctification is attributed,

3. To the word of God.

How does the Spirit sanctify? By the instrumentality of the truth. "Sanctify them by thy truth," &c., Acts xx. 31, 32. Now, the Spirit uses the word of God; and by this word sanctifies the soul. Duties, blessings, privileges, and promises are all exhibited here; and the Spirit applies them to the heart of believers. "As new-born babes," &c. "Let the word of God dwell in you richly," &c. Sanctification is attributed,

4. To faith and prayer.

2 Thess. ii. 13; Acts xv. 9; Matt. vii. 11. Now, the truth only sanctifies as it is received, as we exercise faith upon it. And by prayer we obtain the influence of the Holy Ghost. So that we see the harmony of the passage, "Work out your own salvation," &c. "For it is God," &c. See also how this is illustrated, 2 Cor iii. 18.

III. *The Characteristics of Sanctification.*

1. It is progressive.

The doctrine of instantaneous sanctification is never hinted at in the divine word. There is no such thing as instantaneous manhood. New-born babe, childhood, youth, maturity, &c. No such thing as instantaneous day, twilight, dawn, morning, noon-day. No such thing as instantaneous harvest, seed sown, spring, summer, &c. A building is not erected instantaneously.

2. Sanctification is visible.

Not that the essence of grace can be seen; but its effects are visible. We see that the tree grows, that its boughs and branches are extended. And that the river is wider, &c. The likeness to Christ's image will be more manifest. Deadness to the world. Liveliness in religious exercises.

3. Sanctification must be entire.

"Sanctify you wholly." We are called to strive and labor for perfect holiness. To be holy and perfect, because God, our Father, is holy and perfect. This state will never be realized on earth. But we may attain to entire sanctification, as to its influence on the whole man. Where the understanding is growing in knowledge, judgment in truth; affections in lowly-

mindedness; conscience in purity; will, in obedience; and when the heart, and lip, and life, are dedicated sincerely to God. When the body and soul are consecrated to God "a living sacrifice," &c.

IV. *The importance of Sanctification.*

1. Without it, the design of God's love to us is in vain.

His love designed our restoration to his image, &c.

2. Without it, we are strangers to the Saviour's grace.

He died to redeem. To save us from our sins, &c.

3. Without it, then, we are unacquainted with the Spirit of God.

We are to be the temples, &c. "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ," &c.

4. Without it, we are unfit for heaven.

Heaven is the region of the sanctified. Sanctified employments, pleasures, company, &c. "Without holiness, no man shall see the Lord."

APPLICATION.

1. Let me urge believers to the vigorous use of the means by which sanctification is promoted.

2. Cultivate a close acquaintance with the word of God. Read, meditate, &c. Let it dwell in you richly, &c The Psalmist said, "Thy word have I hid," &c., cxix. 11. See also civ. 133.

3. Keep before you the model of Christ's holy example. "He hath left us an example," &c. "His sheep hear his voice, and follow him," &c. "Let the same mind be in you," &c.

4. Earnestly seek the influence of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit of God must dwell within us, abide with us, &c. We must be led by it; kept by it; sealed by it. Now, we must seek these influences by fervent prayer; must not grieve the Holy Spirit; nor quench the Holy Spirit. Cultivate the graces of the Spirit. Diligently attend the means of grace. They are admirably adapted to quicken us, excite us, strengthen us; and to excite ardent desire after the communion of saints in heaven.

Finally, Never be satisfied with present experience, or present attainments. See Phil. iii. 13, 14. Let the subject comfort the feeble and discouraged. You mourn over past deficiencies, &c.; over little advances made. Lift up your heart to things above. You yet have the means of sanctification. "Give diligence," &c.

SKETCH CCVI.

ON IMMEDIATELY SEEKING THE LORD.

"Now, set your heart and your soul to seek the Lord your God."—1 *Chron.* xxii. 19.

NEVER was there a man of more devotional feeling than David. It was devotion of the deepest, and the most intense kind As hallowed fire, it burned with ardent constancy on the altar of his soul. In secret, he meditated upon God's law, and poured out his soul before him. In his family, the fear of God was cultivated; and the worship of God celebrated. His soul panted for the public courts of the Lord's house. His whole soul was absorbed in the welfare of the tabernacle of God. He had a holy ambition to build a splendid temple for God; but the honor was refused him. See vii. &c. He directs and encourages his son, and urges as a prerequisite, that they should "Now set their heart and soul to seek the Lord." Allow me then to observe, That the first great business of each immortal soul present, is now to seek the Lord.

I. *What is included in seeking the Lord our God.*

1. Our native ignorance of God is implied.

Now, attend to a few scriptural quotations on the subject. "The fool hath said in his heart, there is no God," Ps. xiv. 1 See the pathetic appeal of Jehovah, "Hear, O heavens," &c., Isai. i. 2, 3. Then observe two passages in the New Testament, Eph. ii. 12; 1 Cor. xv. 34. How truly this applies to the great mass of mankind! What do they know of God? Of his greatness, glory, power, dominion, moral perfections, and as their Creator, Comforter, Redeemer, and Judge? Never read, or reflect, or meditate, or pray. How then can they know God? Consider,

2. What connected with God ought we to seek.

We ought to seek,

(1) A knowledge of his character and will. Here, we have his works. The former addresses the external senses; the latter, the mind. The essence of God is

wrapt in impenetrable mystery; but his nature and perfections are fully revealed. Jesus has especially manifested the Father. "No man hath seen," &c. The celebrated Ryland, when first awakened, said, "I am resolved not to rest till I have found out God; and know whether he loves me, or hates me."

(2) We must seek the forgiving favor of God. His approbation is life. As guilty, we do not possess it. But he wills to be gracious. He stands ready to forgive; he delighteth in mercy, he says, "Come, and let us reason," &c.

(3) We must seek his renovating grace. This, every defiled sinner needs. We must seek the removal of the carnal mind. The heart of stone, &c. Seek the cleansing influence of his Spirit. His own image, &c. He, only, can make all things new, &c.

(4) We must seek his constant approbation and blessing. Enoch had this testimony before his translation, that he pleased God We must acknowledge him in all our ways. Set him always before us. Then, we must seek his blessing upon all we are, and all we do. Morning, noon, and evening, said the Psalmist, "I will cry unto thee." Nothing is wisely done but what he directs. Nothing efficiently done but what he sanctions. Necessary in prosperity, adversity, temptation, &c.

II. *The Directions given concerning seeking the Lord.*

It is to be done,

1. With the heart and soul.

Bring the soul to engage in it. Not half-hearted, &c. Not only with the mental, but with the affections of the soul. One would produce formality; the other fanaticism. Both united, genuine religion. Bring the understanding to it. The judgment, the will, the affections, the conscience, and the memory. It is to be done,

2. With decision and resolution.

Set your heart and soul, &c. Be resolved be fixed, &c. Be vigorous. Why is this necessary?

(1) Our hearts are indisposed. Do not love it. Must be compelled.

(2) Our opposition will be great. Enemies will attack us. Satan resist, &c.

(3) Our sacrifices will be numerous. Cross taken up. All forsaken for Jesus. Sell all to have the pearl of great price.

3. It is to be done immediately.

Now, "set your hearts" &c. Why should it?

1. Because the past is irreparable.

We cannot alter the past. Days and years are gone. Time and opportunities are gone. The list of sins is large. The cloud great and black. We cannot alter it. But it may be all cancelled.

2. Because the present is transient.

It is going while I address you. Life is ebbing out. "Every beating pulse," &c. All things remind us that the fashion of this world passeth away. Brethren, the time is short.

3. Because the future is uncertain.

How foolish to build upon to-morrow &c. You are not sure of future life; o future reason; of future opportunities; o future desires. There is a spring-time in human life. There is a summer, and a harvest; and these are now yours.

4. Because, now you have every requisite.

Can any situation in future life be better than this? Will God be more able, or more willing? The blood of Christ more efficacious? The gospel more rich, more free? The Spirit more powerful, &c. Let me,

III. *Urge you to adopt the Course recommended in the Text.*

1. Your connections with him.

He is the Lord, and claims absolute obedience, &c. Your God, the God of your life. The God of all your mercies, who loves you better than you love yourselves.

2. Seeking God is indispensable to solid happiness.

Riches are not. Dignities are not. Learning is not. Even health is not. But without God's favor, you cannot be truly happy.

3. Seeking is essential to eternal salvation.

I conclude, by reading to you a truly solemn and momentous passage, Prov i. 20–27.

SKETCH CCVII.

THE PLAN OF SALVATION

"Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved."—*Acts* ii. 21.

THIS passage forms a part of a ser-

brated prophecy by Joel, and which is now quoted by the apostle Peter, to illustrate the miraculous events of the day of Pentecost. It is clear, however, that the latter part of the prophecy refers to some great calamitous scenes—most likely to the destruction of Jerusalem. Now, let us read the original prophecy, Joel ii. 28; and then turn to one of Christ's predictions. See Luke xxi. 16. The literal application of the text, then, is to those who were delivered from the destruction of Jerusalem, by believing Christ's words, and watching for the signs, and calling upon the name of the Lord. But the text need not thus be restricted; for there is a parallel passage in Rom. x. 13; when the apostle is giving an illustration of the preaching of the gospel, and of the way of salvation. Now, we shall just take the text as it is presented before us. Observe then,

I. *The universal Offer of Salvation.*

"Whosoever." I wish this evening to lay it down as a most important truth, that God never did hate any of his creatures; and therefore, that he never did render the destruction of any of them inevitably certain. It is obvious,

1. That there is no national restriction.

All nations, and people, and tongues, are freely invited, &c. Greek, Jew, Barbarian, &c.

2. There is no restriction as to mental grade.

Christianity does not exclude the philosopher, nor men of science, (Newton, Locke, Boyle. Milton, Sir W. Jones, Addison;) yet it does not exclude the illiterate, the ignorant of mankind. The poorest and most debased savage is welcome.

3. There is no restriction as to temporal circumstances.

The rich and noble are not excluded: only, it is required that they be not high-minded; nor love, nor trust in their riches, but in the living God. Nor are the poorest. No; God is deeply interested in the poor. Christ said, "Go, and tell John," &c. The gospel is preached, &c. Lazarus, &c.

4. No restriction as to sex or age.

It is a fact, that everywhere woman is debased, insulted, and treated with contemptible inferiority, but where the gospel prevails. Go to the atheistical religion of China. Go to the Mohammedanism of Turkey. Go to the cruel rites of Hindooism. But the gospel elevates the weaker sex, and makes her equal in all its advantages and blessings. Nor age. Whosoever includes all. From when reason is just dawning, to the aged sire. "Out of the mouths of babes," &c. Christ's religion, I mean the essentials, are so simple and easy; and even cold, indifferent, rebellious old age is not spurned. See the parable of the vineyard, &c.

5. No restriction as to moral condition.

The gospel is a system of purest morals, extending even to the thoughts. So, of course, it is freely offered to the moral man, whom education, &c., has preserved from the grosser contagions of sin. Yes, these are all welcome. But also the vilest skeptic. See the penitent Rochester. That daring, rebellious spirit who has outraged society. Despicable. Totally debased; yet he is not beyond the pale of the gospel offer. Publicans, harlots, thieves, murderers, &c. What shall I say? "All manner of sin," &c. Do we not then see the richness of this one word, "Whosoever." If so, let me pass,

II. *To the appointed Way of Salvation.*

Whosoever shall "call," &c. Now, here are three things.

1. The object to which our attention is directed,

"The Lord." Doubtless, the true Jehovah. He is the God of salvation. None can save but he, Isai. lxiii. 5; Jer. xxiii. 3. No man can redeem his brother. No power but God's can raise the soul from darkness, death, &c., to light, and life. Then there is,

2. The mode of approach specified.

"Call." In other words, pray. "Call upon me in the day of trouble," &c. Now, it indicates a sense,

(1) Of distress and peril. None will call until they feel this. Peter, when he was sinking, said "Lord, save," &c. Disciples, when they saw their peril, "called," &c. Jailer called. Saul called, &c.

(2) Helplessness. A sense of our total insufficiency. We must be sensible of this, feel this, &c.

(3) The solicitation for aid. Lord, save me. God, be merciful, &c. Now, in soliciting this aid, we must have respect to Christ only as the ground of hope. We

are rebels, outcasts; but we plead the Sonship of Jesus. We are disobedient; we plead his obedience. We are polluted; we plead his purity. We are guilty; we plead his atoning death. We are condemned; we plead his resurrection, and his intercession, at God's right hand. Christ is the only way to the Father. Salvation in none other. There is one God, &c.

3. The absoluteness of the promise.

Whosoever, &c., "shall be saved." God cannot lie. He will not forswear himself. It is his glory to save. He delighteth in mercy, &c. Show us the person who sincerely, humbly, and in Christ's name, called, and was rejected. There never was such a one, and there never will be.

APPLICATION.

1. Adore God for the extensiveness of salvation.

2. Bless God for the easy, gratuitous way of salvation.

3. Comply now with the gracious invitation of salvation.

SKETCH CCVIII.

THE PRAYER OF THE AGED

"Cast me not off in the time of old age; forsake me not when my strength faileth."—*Psalm* lxxi. 9.

This Psalm was penned by David in old age, and may be properly called the aged disciple's portion. He commences it by expressing his confidence in God, ver. 1; he fervently supplicates deliverance and salvation, ver. 2; he expresses his earnest desire to dwell in God, ver. 3; again, solicits deliverance from the hands of his enemies; he avows his hope in God, and takes a retrospect of his ground of trust from his youth up, ver. 5; he then acknowledges the providential care of God, even from his birth, ver. 6; and states that he is a wonderful monument of the goodness of God; he wishes to feel truly grateful, and to rejoice in God, ver. 8; then as it were apprized of his old age and increasing frailties, he prays in the text, "Cast me not off," &c Let us notice,

I. *The Period referred to.*

"The time of old age"

II. *The Prayer presented.*

"Cast me not off."

III. *The Reasons the aged Pious may entertain that this Prayer shall be answered*

I. *The Period referred to.*

"Time of old age." Now we remark,

1 That this is a period at which few of our fellow-creatures arrive.

Take a survey of any assembly, and how few aged persons are to be seen; many, like the May flower, only live a day and then fade and die; every year of childhood is alike the year of death; here and there we see a man or woman laden with years, but facts fully attest that very few reach that period.

2. It is a period of weakness and infirmities.

This is beautifully expressed in the 91st Psalm, ascribed to Moses, ver. 9, 10. Even if health be continued, yet the system weakens, and all its parts become impaired; the effects of time are observable on every earthly object. See that monument of ancient architectural grandeur. Its beauty is effaced, its massive pillars crumble, its foundation totters, and at last falls into a heap of ruins. The oak, of which it is said that three centuries are necessary to its growth, three more it flourishes in maturity, and then requires three more to effect its decay; yet it does decay, by a load of years it withers, and is borne down to the earth, and passes away Need we wonder, then, that man, frail man, who is but as grass, and as the flower of the field, should wither away? Solomon has given us a most striking view of the infirmities attending old age, in the book of Ecclesiastes, xii. 13. When the arms and hands tremble, the knees and legs totter, when food can scarcely be masticated, because the teeth fail, &c. when the eyes become dim, &c.; when the mouth is pressed together by reason of the loss of teeth, and the person almost has to return to the food of children; when the rest is broken and unrefreshing, that they arise at the voice of the birds, &c. when the voice loses its melody and power, and the daughter of music, &c.; when natural courage and intrepidity fails, and they are afraid of that which is high, and fears shall greatly occupy and disturb the mind; when the almond tree, that is, the head, shall flourish with gray hairs; when even the smallest exercise shall exhaust

so that the grasshopper be a burden ; when the earth, amid all its rich variety, shall cease to interest and attract, so that all desire and enjoymen shall fail ; when every thing about the man denotes decay, and that he is hastening to his long home, and to the house appointed for all living.

3. It is often the period of sufferings and adversity.

Not only of natural weakness, but often connected with disease and pain. We seldom meet with a man entirely free from all diseases, how much less is it to be expected in old age ; often, too, old age and poverty are allied ; in that class who have to depend entirely on their own labor for subsistence, the aged must of necessity suffer. Some have been improvident, and have wasted what would have secured old age from want. Others have been unfortunate, they have never been able to do more than supply the wants of the day. Others have had afflictions which have drained them of all their pecuniary resources, and now they have not bodily energy to toil, &c. Old age is often,

4. The period of solitude and desertion.

The aged man often looks around, and finds himself a stranger in the world where he has resided so long. The face of nature, by cultivation and changes, is totally altered ; the village in which he was born has become a populous town ; those who were his contemporaries in youth, have all perished from the earth ; " Lover and friend," he exclaims, " thou hast put far from me ;" perhaps his family have died before him, and he remains like a solitary tree in the wilderness. It seldom happens that the aged meet with that respect and veneration to which they are entitled : their habits are peculiar, their language is often the antiquated speech of the past generation , very often their own children are cold, and careless, and unkind ; and often they are doomed to feel that they are a burden to all around.

5. It is a period of peculiar solemnity.

Such are in the evening of life's day ; such are necessarily on the borders of eternity ; with such the harvest is nearly past. Little alteration can be expected in old age, except the gradual mellowing of the ripe corn for the garner of eternal glory ; such have great opportunities and blessings to account for ; " where much is given," &c. ; seventy years of reason, temporal blessings, sabbaths, bibles, spiritual influence, &c. oh, it is indeed a deeply affecting period. Let us glance,

II *At the Prayer Presented.*

" Cast me not off—forsake me not " &c.

1. Cast me not from thy directing and supporting care, and forsake me not in the times of weakness and perplexity.

Who can do without God? he is the Guide of his people. " If thy presence go not," &c. Without Christ we can do nothing ; he must strengthen and uphold.

2. Cast me not off in seasons of sorrow and infirmity, and forsake me not in the day of darkness and trouble.

In sorrow we require solace ; in infirmity, comfort ; in darkness, ligh ; and in trouble, help.

3. Cast me not off from thy friendship, and forsake me not when earthly comforts fail me.

Earthly comforts do fail ; friends die or desert us ; God can make up for all ; see Hab. iii. 17.

4. Cast me not off from thy forbearing regards, and forsake me not on account of my unworthiness.

We all need God's forbearing regards ; but when we can do nothing, when we seem useless in the world, then we are in danger of desponding, of writing bitter things, &c.

5. Cast me not off when my flesh faileth, and forsake me not in the valley of dissolution.

When flesh and heart fail, we shall especially need God's help ; so, too, when we pass through the valley and the shadow of death. Such, then, is the prayer.

III. *What Reasons have aged Disciples to expect God will answer it.*

1. From the nature of the divine love.

It is not founded on our youth, beauty, parts, or usefulness, but on his own spontaneous goodness. The source and medium of God's love cannot alter.

2. From the examples recorded in revelation.

See Jacob dying in peace, and exclaiming, " I have waited for thy salvation ;" behold David, and as the power of sense and reason weakens, the visions of prophecy brighten, and he utters the 72d Psalm, and concludes, ver. 18, &c. See Simeon, Luke ii. 28, &c.

3. From the fulness of scripture declarations and promises.

"The hoary head shall be," &c., Isa. xlvi. 4; Psalm xci. 15; Job v. 19, to the end.

APPLICATION.

1. Comfort the aged.
2. Exhort them to prayer, patience, and usefulness.
3. Warn the aged sinner, &c.

SKETCH CCIX.

THE HAPPINESS OF RIGHTEOUS POVERTY.

"A little that a righteous man hath, is better than the riches of many wicked."—*Psal.* xxxvii. 16.

We must not judge of any person's real estate, by his temporal condition. Reason and sense would lead us to call the rich and the great highly favored and happy; and the poor, the objects of Divine disregard, and of misery. Divine revelation teaches us a very different doctrine. We are not to judge by external appearances; God sends his blessings upon all men, &c., pagans, idolaters, savages, &c., all are blessed in the things of this life; besides, however dissimilar the circumstances of the righteous, theirs is infinitely the better state. "A little," &c.

I. *The Condition of the Righteous in point of temporal Things, is often inferior to that of the Wicked.*

It is not, however, always so; Abraham, Joseph, David, are exceptions to this. We see it was so,

1. In the case of the Israelites in Egypt. Poor, oppressed slaves.
2. It was so in the days of the Saviour. Parents of Jesus, disciples, friends, &c., generally poor.
3. It is so in the present age of the world.

Very few of the people of God are rich, &c. Now, the Scriptures have expressly declared it shall be so, Jas. ii. 5, 1 Cor. i. 26, &c. The reason is obvious; riches and earthly dignity elevate men above the simplicity and lowliness of mind essential to true religion.

II. *However little the Righteous may have, it is better than the Riches of the Wicked.*

1. The responsibility for possessing a little is not equal to the responsibility of possessing much.

"Where much is given," &c. God is the great proprietor of all things, we are only stewards.

2. The perils of possessing little are not equal to the perils of possessing much.

"If riches increase," &c. Now this passage implies danger, &c., 1 Tim. vi. 9. "Love of money is the root," &c.; see the young man who came to Christ.

3. The righteous have the blessing of God with all their possessions, but the curse of God is in the dwellings of the wicked.

God's presence and favor are theirs. See Pharaoh and the Israelites.

4. The righteous, with their little, are truly happy, which the wicked, however rich, cannot possibly be.

"I have learned," &c.; "Godliness with contentment," &c. Their desires are moderate; they feel they are pilgrims, &c. "No peace, saith my God, to the wicked."

5. The righteous possess spiritual treasure.

They are rich for eternity. The wicked, though rich, shall be poor and miserable forever. The righteous are heirs to a kingdom; heirs of eternal glory. How poor the wicked are at death. Rich man and Lazarus.

APPLICATION.

1. Let the pious poor be comforted.
2. Let all strive to be rich in grace.
3. The end of life is to lay up treasure in heaven.

SKETCH CCX.

CONFESSION AND SUPPLICATION.

"O Lord, though our iniquities testify against us, do thou it for thy name's sake, for our backslidings are many; we have sinned against thee."—*Jer.* xiv. 7.

A consciousness of our weakness and sinfulness is indispensable to our safety and well-being. It is of the utmost importance that we do not think better of our state than we ought to think; this is clearly exhibited in that passage of the epistle of John, "If we say that we have no sin," &c. The text presents to us language peculiarly appropriate, when our souls are humbled before God. Observe, there is,

I *Ingenuous Confession.*

"Our iniquities testify," &c.; "our backslidings are many," &c. Observe three sorts of evil are admitted.

1. Our iniquities testify against us.

Perhaps the term iniquity here, may mean our injustice, as the term primarily signifies. Who of God's people have rendered all to God which he rightly claims? Who has rendered to all his fellow-creatures all that equity and benevolence demands? Who can stand before God's holy law, without his iniquities testifying against him?

2. Our backslidings are many.

To backslide, is to go back from God and his ways. Now, there are both backslidings of heart and life; secret and public. To this, must we not all plead guilty? Have we not often drawn back in times when we should have trusted God, honored God, &c., &c.

3. We have sinned against him.

Violated positive commands; broken expressed injunctions against "Thee," the donor of all our blessings, God of mercy, Fountain of all our enjoyments. Observe in the text,

II *Supplication presented.*

"Do thou it." "It," is in italics, so that the prayer is broken and unfinished; Perhaps would have been better, "Do thou for us," or "Do thou save." When sin is felt and confessed to God, we shall sincerely desire,

1. Divine pardon.

Do thou forgive and blot our sins out of thy book; hence, Christ taught us to pray, "forgive us." None but God can do this, and this must be done, or we cannot possibly be happy or safe. We shall also sincerely desire,

2. Divine grace.

Not only mercy for the past, but grace for the present, and every future time of need. Now, his grace only can give us power against evil, enable us to resist the wicked one, "without it we can do nothing." In the text we have,

III. *A Plea by which the Supplication is urged.*

"O Lord, for thy name's sake."

1. His name is revealed to Moses. Exod. xxxiii. 19, and xxxiv. 7.

2. His name as manifested in Jesus.

Exod. xxiii. 21. The other is the broad and general ground. This is the especial and express way of access to the favor and love of God. He is the Mediator; his sacrifice the only ground of our hope. In and through him God can be just, &c.

APPLICATION.

1. Let us often examine our state.
2. Daily confess our sins.
3. Constantly trust in the Lord Jesus Christ.

SKETCH CCXI.

SEPARATION FROM THE WORLD

"Wherefore, come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you."—2 *Cor.* vi. 17

This paragraph commences with the apostle's prohibiting the marriage of believers with unbelievers, and then he extends the subject to the connection of the Christian with the world generally. Hence, he says, "Come out," &c.

I. *The Christian will have to do with the World while in it.*

He does not refer to its civil affairs; to buying, selling, &c., neither to the relationships existing; hence, the believing wife is not to leave her husband, &c.

II. *The Christian is to consider the World as the Sphere of his Influence and Usefulness.*

He is to shine in it, savor it, attract it by his affections, reprove it by his holiness, render it excuseless, &c.

III. *The Christian must be morally separate from it, and he must spiritually abandon it.*

In repentance we forsake it. By faith in Christ we are crucified to it, "I am crucified," &c. By baptism, we solemnly renounce it; in sanctification we are progressively raised above it, &c.

IV. *Many Motives concur in urging us to this Course of Conduct.*

(1) Our great exemplar. He was separate, holy, harmless, &c.

(2) Our nature and principles are not of it. Born from above, &c.

(3) Our profession demands it

(4) Our duty to the world requires it. If we appear of it, we shall harden it make it appear that religion is of no moment.

(5) Our own safety demands it; we

cannot be in it and of it; without moral infection, it will separate us from fellowship with God, and finally plunge us into perdition. Look at Sampson, Lot, Solomon, Demas, &c. Cherish the influences of the Holy Spirit by prayer, and read the word, and you cannot err

APPLICATION.

1. Some seasons are peculiarly fraught with peril to the believer.

2. There are times when your decision must be manifest, and your piety obvious.

SKETCH CCXII.

THE BLESSEDNESS OF GIVING OVER THAT OF RECEIVING

"Remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive."—*Acts* xx. 35.

THAT is a striking verse which concludes the gospel testimony of John, see xxi. 25. Doubtless, the passage is highly hyperbolical, but it contains this great truth; that the Saviour's sayings were so very numerous that it was impossible that they all could be recorded, or if recorded, that they could be read. Now, we need not be astonished at finding Paul using a saying which he ascribed to Jesus, although it is not found in the writings of the evangelists. The fact of Paul, who possessed the spirit of inspiration, stating this sentence to be Christ's, is sufficient warrant for its divinity. Let us, then, regard this passage as a precious gem of truth, rescued by the apostle from oblivion, that it might instruct and edify all true believers, unto the end of the world. In the text,

I. *There is a Blessedness implied.*

The blessedness implied, is that of "receiving." The passage derives all its logical force from this.

1. It is blessed to receive a supply of our temporal wants.

Thus, we are blessed of God every day. The body has its wants and necessities, and these must be met, or misery is the result. As temporal happiness is infinitely preferable to temporal misery, then it necessarily follows that it must be blessed to receive. Now, it is also blessed to receive his temporal supply through the medium of our fellow-men. For an illustration of this, see the miracle of the loaves and fishes, Matt. xiv. 14, &c.

2. It is blessed to receive the alleviation of our sorrows and sufferings.

Man is an heir of sorrow; born to it ever exposed to it. In a world where it abounds, sometimes this may be sorrow of mind, sometimes pain of body: well, it is a blessed thing to receive consolation, to receive healing, or even alleviation. Who does not congratulate those who were the objects of Christ's compassion on earth? Do you not say that blind Bartimeus was blessed; the man whose son was possessed; the lepers; the widow who received her son to life again? O yes, surely they were blessed. So, when our poor, afflicted fellow-creatures are sick and in sorrow, is it not blessed for them to receive sympathy and aid?

3. It is especially blessed to receive spiritual favors.

Jesus styled it to be blessed to have the privileges of the gospel, Luke x. 23. When the mind is dark, how blessed is the light; when the heart is hard, how blessed to receive the powerful, softening influences of the Holy Spirit; when the soul is contrite, and in sorrow, how blessed to receive the comforts of the Holy Ghost, and a sense of forgiving love; how blessed to receive grace to help, &c. Oh, who can tell how blessed it is to receive the pearl of great price; the new name; the white stone, &c.? Now, God generally makes use of man as the instrument in conveying the knowledge of the way of salvation to the benighted sinner. But we notice,

II. *The greater Blessedness affirmed.*

"It is more blessed to give," &c.

1. It is more honorable to give than to receive.

Men have applied worldly honor to many things horrid and vile. The successful leader of a destroying army; the man who risks his life, and dares to attempt the death of another, is styled so. Oh, this is falsely named, this is baseness, whatever men may call it. A great deal of the honor of the world, which is not evil, is vain, trifling, and worthless; but there is true honor connected with benevolence and liberality. The honors of a Howard, a Clarkson, and a Reynolds will flourish when the names of statesmen, philosophers, and warriors shall have perished from the earth

The station of the recipient is less dignified than that of the person who is necessitated to receive.

2. It is more pleasurable to give than to receive.

The circumstances of the giver must be best. One indicates fulness: the other, indigence and necessity. The feelings of the giver are much more pleasurable; it is true luxury, the essence of bliss, and yields solid satisfaction, &c.; conscience smiles; God smiles; and those whom we relieve smile. Amid these, the soul obtains noontide joy and unspeakable blessedness.

3. It is more profitable to give.

By benevolence, we improve our own character; we increase the talents which God has given us. "Unto him that hath," &c. We cannot do good to others without benefiting ourselves. The streams which go out from us, will return upon us again. More especially, it is more profitable to sow the golden grain, than to lay it up. Now, in giving we shall obtain enlargement of soul; expansion of the moral powers; and in the day of judgment, a cup of cold water given to a disciple, shall not lose its reward. See Isa. lviii. 10, 11; 1 Tim. vi. 17, &c.

4. It is more heavenly and divine.

When we think of earth, we contemplate a needy world, constantly requiring the outpouring of blessings from above. When we think of heaven, we think of a world of abundance and profusion; a world from whence flow streams of bliss throughout the whole universe of God. But what is the greatest blessedness to which man or angel is capable of being exalted? Likeness to the divine glory. This was man's original dignity. And do not forget, that while God is glorious in wisdom, holiness, and truth, yet none of these form the preeminent glory of God. I must direct you back to the history of Moses; to him who held such holy fellowship and converse with Deity; who prayed, (Exod. xxxiii. 13,) "I beseech thee, show me thy glory," &c. God said, "I will make all my goodness to pass before thee." Then the Psalmist invites us to "taste and see," &c. And this is the apostle's description of Deity: "God is love." Thus, God is good universally, and is ever doing good, by giving to all his creatures. All depend upon him, he supports all, from the flaming seraph to the fluttering insect; and it is only when we rise to the lofty eminence of liberality, that we are closely allied to the heavenly and divine. Then, remember the Son of God, the Redeemer of the world.

"Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ," &c.; and what was his whole life? a life of giving; he gave light to the ignorant; he gave pardon to the guilty; peace to the wretched; hope to the miserable; life to the dead; and salvation to the lost. What gave he? He gave you his time and his powers. He gave his living words, and flowing tears. He gave all his heart's softest emotions. He gave his person to the soldiers, his back to the scourgers, his cheek to the smiters, his head to the thorns. He gave what? He gave you his life; he humbled himself to death, even the death of the cross. In giving, therefore, we become like-minded with Jesus, and obtain the dignity of being his true followers. I refer finally,

To the Holy Spirit. What is the prerogative of the Spirit? oh, it is to give, it is to impart. And what could we do without his influence? without this, no knowledge of sin, no conversion, no regeneration, no holiness, no heaven; yes, it is the glory of the Deity to impart and to receive not. Then, to give, is to be like God; and to participate in his felicity, must be blessedness indeed.

APPLICATION.

Learn,

1. That the Christian character is essentially benevolent. We cannot have the mind of Christ, obey his precepts, or follow his example, without it.

2. Christians should often remember Christ's words, especially when the heart is backward, or cold, or wearied, when great demands are made, &c.

3. Christ is a merciful master. His claims are never hard, &c. He expects us to do according to the ability he has given. Widow's mite, Mark vii. 42. All have something to impart.

4. What is given to the Lord must be given rightly, with purity of motive. Not ostentatiously, not self-righteously.

5. True beneficence will be amply rewarded at the last day.

SKETCH CCXIII.

HUMILITY

"Be clothed with humility."—1 *Pet* v. 5.

The chief ingredient in the first sin ever committed on earth, was pride. Our first parents, aspiring to be gods, fell into crime, degradation, and misery. Pride is one of the most universally prevalent sins of humanity. All persons are in danger of its deadly influences; and few persons are entirely free from it. There is no remedy for it but the grace of God. And to deliver the soul from it is about the last thing that livine grace effects. Yet, it must be eradcated entirely, before we can be fit to die, or fit for heaven. There is nothing more offensive to God, or more injurious to the soul. The word of God is full and expressive on this subject. With the lowly God will dwell, and to such he will look. "Whosoever exalteth himself," &c. As the elect of God, put on humbleness of mind. "Be clothed," &c. Notice,

I. *The Christian Virtue recommended.*

II. *The Extent to which it must be possessed.*

III. *The Motives by which it may be enforced.*

IV. *The Means by which it may be attained.*

I. *The Christian Virtue recommended.*

"Humility." Every virtue and grace have their counterfeits, so that we must examine narrowly to distinguish between that which is real, and that which is not. The apostle speaks of a voluntary humility, Col. ii. 18. There is often displayed an affected humility—a pretended self-degradation, merely designed to obtain the good opinions of men, which is, in fact, the worst kind of pride. Humility consists in low and abased views of ourselves, and our attainments. The humble man will feel,

1. The native unworthiness of his own state and character.

2. He will feel the imperfections of all his attainments.

3. He will be conscious of his moral weakness and defects; and he will lament and confess them.

4. He will entirely depend upon divine grace, and give all honor and glory to God.

Let us notice,

II. *The Extent to which it must be possessed.*

"Be clothed." It is to be our garment and to cover us all over.

1. Our experience must be clothed with it.

Whatever we may be in our Christian experience, we shall have great need of humility. If better than we once were, i is all owing to God's grace. If there is much to look upon with pleasure; yet what defects, what unworthiness, what barrenness!

2. It should clothe our profession.

Religion must be professed boldly, cheerfully, yet humbly. Beware, lest we profess ourselves, &c., instead of Christ. How careful Paul was to exalt Christ, and abase himself! A self-confident profession of religion will disgust the observer.

3. It must clothe our religious exercises.

When we draw near to God in any religious duty, we must do it with great humility of soul. In reading the word. In hearing the gospel. In praise. In prayer.

4. It must clothe all our duties, and labors in the cause of God.

We cannot fulfil any office acceptably without humility. Pride, like the plague spot, will taint every thing, and render every thing loathsome to God. This garment must cover us all over. The creature must be concealed, and Christ displayed. "Not I, but the grace of God that is in me." Our life must be hid with Christ in God.

5. It must clothe all ages and classes of Christians.

The young and the aged. The poor and the rich. The illiterate and the wise. The member, the deacon, and minister. All are addressed. "Be clothed," &c. Consider,

III. *The Motives by which it may be enforced.*

1. It will render us well-pleasing to God

"Though the Lord be high," &c. "Every one that is proud," &c.

2. It will greatly tend to our Christian fruitfulness.

Humility is the rich and fertile vale watered by the streams of the river of God.

3. It will abundantly promote our happiness.

Save us from a thousand mortifications Secure the constant presence of God. See Isai. lvii. 15.

4. It will be an effectual preservative against apostacy.

Prov. xvi. 18. "God will abase the

proud," &c. Peter's fall was occasioned greatly by this.

5 It will work within us a meetness for the heavenly state.

None but the humble shall inherit the kingdom of heaven. Heaven, the region of humility. "Blessed are the poor in spirit," &c. "Whosoever shall humble himself as this little child," &c. Not a proud look, or thought, can enter there. Consider, then,

IV. *The Means by which it may be attained.*

1. An intimate knowledge of our own hearts.

What is there to be proud of, &c.

2. An acquaintance with the models of humility placed before us, in the word of God.

Abraham. "Dust and ashes." Jacob. "I am not worthy." Gen. xxxii. 9. David. 1 Chron. xxix. 4. Job. "Behold I am vile." Paul. "I know that in me," &c.

3. Daily contemplation of the meek and lowly Jesus. Phil. ii. 6, 7.

4. Fervent and constant prayer to God for his humbling grace.

Much prayer will necessarily tend to make us humble. God alone can keep our hearts low before him.

APPLICATION.

1. Let the subject lead to self-examination.

2. To renewed repentance and confession.

3. To resignation, self-humiliation, and prayer.

4. Let the sinner humble himself before God, and seek mercy.

SKETCH CCXIV

THE IMPORTANCE OF GOD'S PRESENCE.

"And he said unto him, If thy presence go not with me, carry us not hence."—*Exod.* xxxiii. 15.

It is impossible to contemplate the character of Moses, without astonishment and delight. The events of his history are most wonderful. His peril and deliverance when an infant. His preservation and adoption by Pharaoh's daughter. The honors, riches, and learning, to which he was raised in his youth. And the wonderful self-denial he evinced in renouncing all, from a pious principle of attachment to God and his people. Yet great, and learned, and intrepid as he was, the lowly spiritual graces of true religion were pre-eminent Consider his humility and self-abasement, his meekness, and patience; his fervency and prayer. Amid all his greatness, he relied entirely on God. The people had been worshipping the golden calf, which they had formed in his absence; God had visited them with his displeasure, and now threatens to withdraw his presence. See ver. 2, 3, &c. Moses interceded, ver. 9–13. God yields and promises his presence, ver. 14. Our text is the reply of Moses. "If thy," &c. Let us notice,

I. *The Divine Presence referred to*

II. *Its essential Importance to God's journeying Israel.*

I. *The Divine Presence referred to.*

"Thy presence." That is, the presence of God. Now, in the holy oracles we are often directed,

1. To God's universal presence

This is what is termed, the Omnipresence of God, on his being everywhere present. Hence, he exclaims, "Do not I fill heaven and earth, saith the Lord." This is quite an overwhelming view of the grandeur of God. There is no place where God is not. Hence, the psalmist exclaims "Whither shall I go from thy Spirit," &c. Ps. cxxxix. 7.

2. There is God's glorious presence.

Now, this has been seen on earth, but is principally confined to heaven. God had exerted his creating attributes in the formation of our world. When he laid the foundations of the earth; when he had gathered the waters of the ocean together; when he had stretched out the heavens as a curtain; when he had placed the sun in his pavilion; when he had bestudded the firmament with stars; when he had finished the creation of our system, and pronounced it very good. Oh, then, indeed, was the divine glory developed beyond the power of our imaginations to comprehend. But his glorious presence is chiefly confined to heaven. Heaven is the region of glory There is his splendid palace—his imperial residence. There he has his throne, and his ministers of state. There are the regions of joy, and the rivers of pleasure "In thy presence," &c. God is the light and joy. and glory of heaven.

3. There is God's symbolical presence

The chief symbols God has employed, are light and fire. "God is light," &c. Hence, he appeared to Moses in the bush. Also, he went before Israel in a pillar of cloud, &c. Hence, too, in the temple, the bright cloud of the presence of the Lord filled the house.

4. There is God's judicial presence.

Hence, God speaks, and says, "I will come near to you to judgment." Mal. iii. 5. So, likewise it is asked, "Shall there be evil in a city, and the Lord hath not done it?" Hence, too, at the confusion of tongues, "The Lord said, Let us go down, and there confound their language," &c. Gen. xi. 7.

5. There is God's providential presence.

This has respect to the divine government—to his upholding all things, preserving all things, &c. "In him we live," &c. He is good to all, &c. As the God of providence he clothes the fields, &c.; feeds the ravens, &c.; and supplies the wants of all his creatures. Now, this providence is most benignant towards his people.

6. There is the Lord's gracious presence.

See Isai. lvii. 15; John xiv. 23; 2 Cor. vi. 16. "I will dwell in them, and walk in them," &c. "Behold, I stand at the door and knock," &c. Now, this gracious presence, and God's benign providence, always work together. "The Lord loveth the righteous." "He keeps them in the hollow of his hand, and as the apple of his eye," &c. It is then the gracious presence of God which is so desirable. Let us then consider,

II. *Its essential Importance to God's journeying Israel.*

There is a striking analogy in the condition of Israel, &c. In the desert, and that of the Christian in the world. Both redeemed—both expectants of a goodly land—both exposed to dangers; and both in a progressive state, journeying to the place, &c.

1. The presence of God is necessary to dispose us to seek after salvation.

In our natural state we hate the things of God, and live to ourselves; we should never seek after him, but go farther and farther from him, even to all eternity. God, therefore, must change our hearts—he must take the stony heart away, &c. Then we shall love and delight in his ways, Ezek. xxxvi. 25.

2. His presence must direct and guide us on our journey.

"It is not in man to," &c. "We must commit our way," &c. "Thou shalt guide me," &c. Then, there is God's engagement, Isai. xlii. 6. Thus, he guided Israel, "and led them by a right way," &c.

3. His presence must sustain us on our course.

The new convert is a babe. What can he do? how can he walk? &c. Well, God must sustain; and he has said, "I will carry the lambs," &c. "Fear not, I am with thee." "I will strengthen. I will help, yea, I will uphold thee," &c.

4. His presence must supply our need. Man cannot supply his own. The wilderness of the world cannot yield it. None but God can do this. This, he has engaged to do. "The Lord God is a sun and shield." "The Lord is my shepherd," &c. "My God," &c. He sent Israel water from the rock, and manna from heaven. "They that fear the Lord shall not want," &c.

5. His presence must protect and deliver us.

The way is full of difficulties. Mountains, seas, &c., as it was literally to Israel's. See Ps. cxiv.; Isai. xli. 14. Then, as to our foes, the Lord fights for his people. He is the captain of our salvation. "More than conquerors," &c.

6. His presence must yield us enjoyment on our way.

We cannot travel without this. Now God only can make us happy. He is our light and song. See psalmist's account Ps. lxiii. 1–5. His presence makes our paradise.

7. His presence must bring our journey to a blessed consummation.

"He is the author and finisher," &c. He who hath begun, must complete. He who regenerated must be with us in death, and receive us to glory. Well, "when flesh and heart fail," &c.

APPLICATION.

1. All things are of God.

2. Let us earnestly seek the divine presence. Never attempt any thing without it.

3. Let us seek daily access to him by Christ.

4. Let sinners come by faith in Christ and be accepted of him.

SKETCH CCXV.

THE JOYFUL APPEARANCE OF ZION'S KING.

"Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion: shout, O daughter of Jerusalem; behold, thy King cometh unto thee; he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt, the foal of an ass."—*Zech.* ix. 9.

THIS is one of those striking predictions delivered concerning the Messiah, the Saviour of the world. The fulfilment of this Scripture is stated in the following passage of the Gospel by Matthew, xxi. 1–6. It is also confirmed in the Gospel by John xii. 13. The kingly office of Jesus is frequently stated in the Holy Scriptures. As such, he was typified by Melchisedec, and David, and Solomon. Hence, he is called the King of Glory, the King of Israel, the King of kings. God says of him, by David, "I have set my king upon my holy hill of Zion." Jeremiah says of him, "A king shall reign and prosper." Daniel says, "A mighty king shall stand up to rule," &c. Then, Zechariah, looking through the vista of prophecy, exclaims, "Rejoice," &c. The text refers to Christ's spiritual administration. Observe, we are referred,

I. *To the regal Office of the Redeemer.*

II. *To the peculiar Features of his Character.*

III *The joyful Reception which should be given to him*, "Rejoice," &c.

I. *To the regal Office of the Redeemer.*

That this office belongs to Jesus, has been abundantly established in the introductory remarks and quotations given. There are four ideas we associate with royalty.

1. Supreme dignity.

The king is considered as the head of the nation. Now, Jesus is the head of his spiritual empire. Men have been greatly exalted in the church of God, as Moses, Elijah, Solomon. But Jesus is the Lord of that house in which Moses was a servant. He is Elijah's Lord; and a greater than Solomon. All honor and glory belong to him. He is above all, the Lord of all. Fairer than the sons of men; and greater than the angels. In all things he hath the pre-eminence. See Heb. i. 3; Eph. i. 20. As a king,

2. He possesses legislative authority.

That is, the right of enacting laws for the regulation of his kingdom. Hence God spake from heaven, and said, "This is my beloved Son, hear ye him." Hence, his sermon on the mount evinced his authority, Matt. v. 21–43, &c. So also the people were astonished, because he spoke with authority, &c. It is also written, "The Father loveth the Son," &c. "All power is given," &c. As a king,

3. His riches are immense.

He is Lord and proprietor of all things. Riches of nature are all his. Riches of glory belong to him. His treasures are boundless, inexhaustible, and eternal. But kings have dominion;

4. So he has universal dominion.

A king by right, and in name, without subjects, is only a shadow. Christ's absolute rule extends to the highest heaven, and to the lowest hell, and to the whole universe. But in his mediatorial character, he has dominion over his church. He dwells in Zion; administers all her affairs; receives her homage; subdues her enemies; extends her borders; and shall do so, till his kingdom fills the whole earth.

"Jesus shall reign where'er the sun," &c.

Notice,

II. *The peculiar Features of his Character.*

1. He is just.

Personally immaculate. Made in the likeness of sinful flesh, yet holy, undefiled, &c. His life was one exhibition of it. His enemies attested it. Judas; "I have betrayed," &c. The wife of Pilate warned of God, &c. Pilate said, "I am innocent of the blood of this just man." His death was a display of justice. He died to justify the law His kingdom is based on justice. His spiritual laws are all based on justice. His kingdom is righteousness, and peace, and joy, &c. He makes all his subjects just.

2. He is lowly.

If dignity and greatness could be advanced as a cause for lofty feelings, &c., then Jesus would have ample reason for being so; but, behold his condescension. Parents, birth-place, disciples. Those with whom he mingled, &c. "Come unto me," &c. "For I am meek," &c. So it was illustrated in the case, when the text was fulfilled. God prohibited the introduction of horses into Judea, to prevent training for

war and self-confidence. See Ps. xx. 7. Solomon first introduced them. Christ came not, therefore, in a chariot, or on the horse of war, but riding on an ass, &c.

3. Having salvation.

This is the climax. This was his great design. The leading object. "Call his name Jesus." "He came not to condemn," &c. He saved from bodily maladies, demoniacal possessions; and from the guilt of iniquity and sin. Having salvation. In himself. Having it only; having it in abundance; having it for gratuitous communication.

III. *The joyful Reception we should give him.*

1. Rejoice in his equity and justice.

He will fulfil his word. Perform all his promises.

2. Rejoice that he is lowly.

He will not despise the poor and wretched. "He will not break the bruised reed," &c. "Nor despise the day of small things."

3. Rejoice that he has salvation.

Do people rejoice when a deliverer appears, to deliver from the oppressor? "He comes to preach deliverance," &c. Does the patient rejoice in the approach of an infallible physician, &c.? Does the prodigal rejoice when he hears his father's forgiving voice?

APPLICATION.

1. Let the children of Zion be joyful in their King.

2. Let the penitent receive Christ, and be happy.

SKETCH CCXVI.

CHRIST RECEIVING SINNERS.

"This man receiveth sinners."—*Luke* xv. 2

The Pharisees were the greatest enemies Jesus had to encounter in his holy career of mercy and salvation. They were filled with spiritual pride, and were so self-righteous, that they treated with disdain the message of grace published by Christ. In addition to this, they wished to monopolize the profession of religion to themselves, and instead of rejoicing in the repentance of the profligate and profane, they treated such with disdain and contempt. It is said in ver. 1, that all the publicans, &c., drew near to Christ; this was quite sufficien for these envious Pharisees and scribes and "they murmured, saying," &c., &c This sentiment, which they uttered in mal ice and wickedness, was the occasion o! that beautiful series of parables, beginnin, with the lost sheep, and ending with tha of the prodigal son. The sentiment ex presses the very glory of the gospel; it is one we would convey to earth's utmost bound. "This man receiveth sinners." Let us consider,

I. *The Description of Sinners Chris will receive.*

Sin is the transgression of the law. A sinner is a transgressor. Now, this is a character applicable to all men. "For all have sinned;" "All we like sheep," &c. But all are not equally involved in sin, some are hundred pence debtors, some thousand; the sins of some are as scarlet, others doubly died, as crimson. Now Jesus will receive,

1. Sinners of all ages.

He loves such as seek him early; he says such shall assuredly find him, but he will not reject those of maturer age. There is hope even for the gray-headed transgressor, at the eleventh hour; he sent his servants to invite, &c.

2. Sinners of all stations.

God showed mercy to the royal Manasseh, and to Nebuchadnezzar. He will not reject on this account. but he will not despise the poor and wretched of mankind. He healed the nobleman's son, and ruler's daughter, and he showed mercy, too, to the poor woman of Canaan, and to the blind beggar Bartimeus. External circumstances do not affect the compassion of Jesus. He receives,

3. Sinners of all degrees.

Those who have been outwardly moral, as the young man; those who have been abandoned and profligate, as Mary Magdalene; those who have been desperately vile, as the thief, &c.; those who have been cruel and malevolent, as Saul and as the Jerusalem murderers. No amount o. guilt and enormity can overtop his power and willingness to save. The disease cannot be too universal, nor the depravity too desperate. "It is a faithful saying, &c. Consider,

II. *Into what Jesus receives Sinners.*

He receives them,

1. Into his forgiving grace and favor

He did not come to condemn the sinner—to destroy the lives of sinners, but to save them. The foundation blessing of salvation is the forgiveness of sin. It is his prerogative to forgive sinners; he did so in the days of his flesh; he died for this, and he is exalted a prince and a Saviour, &c.; he not only pardons, but graciously receives them into his affectionate regards.

2. He receives them into his family.

See the prodigal not only forgiven, but made welcome; family feast, garment, ring. Christ has a spiritual family on earth, called his church, his kingdom, his fold; an association of believing souls, over which he presides, which he blesses, &c. Now, into this happy community he receiveth sinners; aliens and foreigners are made citizens; those afar off, made near; those once not beloved, and not a people, now beloved, and the sons and daughters of the Lord.

3. He receives them into his heaven.

Hence, the penitent malefactor was the earnest and pledge of the eternal salvation, even of the vilest sinners. Jesus has opened a way to heaven for sinners; he sits in heaven to dispense the blessings of salvation to sinners; he gives a title for heaven to sinners; he sends his Spirit, to dwell in the souls of sinners, and to guide them to heaven, and when they die, he admits to his everlasting kingdom and glory.

III. *The Way and Manner in which Christ receiveth Sinners.*

1. He receives them in the way of acknowledgment and confession.

He that denies his sin, or he that covers his sins, he rejects. "He that confesseth," &c. "If we confess," &c. David confessed; publican confessed; prodigal confessed. If we feel our sins, there will be deep and sincere confession.

2. He receives them in the way of repentance, or turning from sin.

He saves from, not in, or with their sins. Rebellion must end; sin must be forsaken; way of iniquity abandoned. He requires that they forsake all

He receives in the way of humility and faith.

To believe in him, both in his ability and willingness, was, and ever will be essential. The leper came and said, 'Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst." Now, we must believe in his power and readiness to save; rely entirely on him for salvation. We see striking evidences of this faith in the people who let the sick through the roof; in the woman who touched the hem of his garment. This is the only way in which Jesus receiveth, &c. Now, as to the manner in which Christ receives them.

1. Most freely.

So far from being reluctant, he is deeply solicitous. He waits, invites, exhorts, entreats, expostulates, &c.

2. Most tenderly.

He does not wound by upbraiding. "He upbraideth not." He did not upbraid Matthew, the tax-gatherer, nor Zaccheus, the extortioner, nor Mary, the sinner, nor the thief.

3. Most readily.

That is, at once. He does not parley, does not send them to the desert of Sinai, nor to the school of reformation, but just as they are, at once, with open heart and arms, &c.

APPLICATION.

1. The subject is one to which every believer's heart responds. Remember when you were first alarmed, &c. How readily Christ, &c.

2. The subject is full of encouragement to the inquiring sinner. Do not hesitate, do not doubt, &c.

3. The subject is limited to the present life. Here only he receives No mercy, no pardon, no salvation in the grave.

SKETCH CCXVII.

ACTIVE FAITH

"Your work of faith."—1 *Thess.* i. 3.

One of the leading graces of true religion is faith. It is an essential grace Religion must begin with it: carried on with it, and it cannot end safely without it; we cannot die happily without faith Let us offer,

I. *Some Remarks on Faith.*

1. The object of faith is God.

God essentially, or God in Christ Have faith in God. "Ye believe in God. believe also in me." Saving faith

is faith in the person, righteousness, and merits of the Lord Jesus Christ. Notice,

2. The nature of faith.

It is credence, reliance, trust; credence of a statement; reliance on promise; trust in engagements. Notice,

3. The ground of faith.

It is the Word of God; the testimony of the Holy Scriptures. It must regard all the contents of the inspired oracles. Every word of God is pure, and true, and good. "All Scripture," &c. Notice,

II. *The Work of Faith.*

Now faith is not a mere idea, or notion, or principle. It is a living, powerful, operative grace.

1. It works repentance.

We shall never see or feel the evil of sin. until we believe what the Word of God asserts.

2. Faith works obedience to the will of God.

Jas. ii. 17.

3. Faith works self-denial.

Abraham left his country. Moses, &c., Heb. xi. 24, &c. See how Paul denied himself, and at the end said, "I know in whom," &c. "I have fought," &c. Without it, man will not, cannot bear the cross, &c.

4. Faith works benevolence and activity.

It is said to work by love, Gal. v. 6. I cannot savingly believe God's love to me, without this faith producing a powerful feeling of love to others.

5. Faith works comfort.

Psal. xxvii. 13. "Let not your hearts," &c.

6. Faith works triumph over our enemies.

Life of faith crucifies the flesh; overcomes the world; quenches all the darts of the devil.

7. Faith works holiness.

"Purifying their hearts by faith." Belief of the truth. Sanctified by faith in Christ's precious blood, &c.

APPLICATION.

1. Let your work of faith be manifest.

2. Let it be constant.

3. Progressive. Abound yet more and more, &c.

SKETCH CCXVIII

THE CHURCH'S DUTY TO CHRISTIAN PASTORS

DELIVERED AT AN ORDINATION SERVICE.

"And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labor among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; and to esteem them very highly in love, for their work's sake. And be at peace among yourselves."—1 *Thess.* v. 12, 13.

No relationship more solemn and important than that subsisting between the Christian minister and his flock. It is a spiritual relationship; it is a dignified relationship; it is a deep, responsible relationship; it is a relationship clearly defined in the sacred volume; and the duties both of pastor and people are comprehensively stated, and plainly placed before us By taking heed to the inspired oracles, the Christian minister cannot mistake his duties, and the way in which they are to be discharged; and Christian churches, by the same holy rule, will at once perceive the return which they are to make to the minister God hath placed over them. The text refers both to the office of the minister, and the duty of the people. The Christian bishop or pastor is over the church, and he labors in it; he is an under shepherd, who is to watch over the flock, and to feed them; to rule over the church as Christ's servant, by enforcing the authority of the truth; and by instruction, exhortation, warning, and admonition, to labor earnestly that he may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus. But his office and duty have been fully placed before you. Let us then consider your obligations as a church, to the pastor God has placed over you. In doing this, let us,

I. *Consider the Duties specified in the Text.* And,

II. *The Principles on which they may be enforced.* Consider,

I. *The Duties specified.* Now,

1. There is spiritual acknowledgment.

"To know them," means more than acquaintanceship or personal recognition; it signifies that you are to acknowledge them as the servants of God, and to approve them as such; to receive them in their spiritual capacity and office, as your teachers and overseers in the Lord. Now, you are especially bound to do this, from the fact that your pastor is the man of your own choice

he has not been enforced upon you by any bishop, or by act of Parliament, or by any synod or presbytery. You invited him to preach the gospel to you, he has been a probationer with you; you have approved his ministry, and hence, have freely, cheerfully, and prayerfully elected him to the high and dignified office of pastor over you. Then you are to know and acknowledge him in his official character as the man of your own approval and choice.

2. There must be great affectionate regard.

You are to "esteem" him; to value him; to regard him of great worth, for so the word signifies. Do we not value our parents? Now he will have to act as a father, to be filled with paternal anxiety, to labor for your welfare, &c. Do we not esteem or value the physician who watches over our health, &c.? Now, he is to have the charge of your spiritual health, &c., to labor, and visit, and advise, that you may be strong and healthy, vigorous sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty. Is not the pilot reckoned of great value, who has the care of the vessel, &c.? Now, he is to direct you how you may safely cross the sea of life, and is sacredly responsible that he so guide you that you may not miss the haven of eternal life. You are to esteem him highly, yea, very highly; you are to esteem one another; you are to esteem all the Lord's people everywhere; but your pastor must have a high place, and deep place, and an extensive place, in your regards; next to Christ, he should have no equal nor compeer in your hearts. "Very highly in love;" in sincere affection; not cold admiration, but in hearty and intense affection. Esteem, without love, is like the light of the moon, cold, and will surely wane; but esteem grounded in love is like the beams of the great orb of day, cheering and delightful, and will encompass him with heavenly radiance every day. Now, if your conduct is influenced by this high esteem in love, it will be evident, it will be a thing quite clear. Let me say it will be manifest,

(1) By your attendance on his ministry. If he is bound to preach to you, the obligation is equally binding upon you to receive the word which he dispenses. Nothing will compensate for neglect here. This is a great evil in all churches; many attend at best, but occasionally; many are once a day hearers; many are universal hearers, a sort of gipsies; you meet with them everywhere except at home. Nothing will encourage and cheer him more, than to see you in your places in the house of God. You will manifest, &c.,

(2) By cheerful and affectionate co-operation in his labors. The church is a family; all are to be usefully engaged; army—vineyard. God says to every convert, "Go, work," &c.; many spheres of labor; many demands on your exertions Your minister must take the lead, and you must rally round him. Schools, tracts, meetings for prayer and exhortation, invitations to your neighbors, &c.;—even mothers at home. "Man in America who kept a book" of hopeful persons. Now do this in love, and with cheerfulness; let the love of Christ constrain you to it, and do all to his glory. Let it be said of your minister, that he is laboring with a chosen band, whose hearts God hath touched. You will manifest, &c.,

(3) By treating him always with kindness and respect. Towards him, the law of kindness must ever have respect. However he may familiarize himself with you, and be as your companion and friend, yet let not this betray you into a disrespectful course of conduct towards him. In your families, in the meetings for church business, and in all your intercourse, have respect to the spirit of kindness; this will bind his soul closer and closer to you, in holy and indissoluble bonds. Do not circulate or receive reports concerning him. The purest characters have not escaped reproach and slander. No doubt Satan rejoices when he can effect this; the world, and infidels, and apostates especially will triumph. Your minister's character is in your own keeping, you are to be the guardians of his reputation; this will be easily effected, if you will not circulate or hear reports. A specific rule is laid down by the apostle, 1 Tim. v. 19; mark and remember that. Now, this kindness will include also, the ministering to the wants of your minister. The care of a church of any magnitude, is enough for any man, however talented, active, and strong; all his energies and time you will require. Then, as a matter of justice and equity, you will feel bound to minister to his temporal necessities, and keep his mind free from pecuniary anxieties and vassalage.

I trus you will do this cheerfully, and to the utmost of the ability which, as a church, you possess. You will manifest your esteem,

(4) By giving him a constan place in your prayers and supplications. What stress the greatest of all the apostles laid upon this, "Brethren, pray for us," &c., Col. iv. 3; and again, "Finally, brethren," &c. If Paul felt thus, with his learning, talents, inspiration, experience, usefulness, &c., oh, how much more we, who are placed in such inferior circumstances! Pray for him in the closet, the family, and in the social means; pray that he may be filled with knowledge, with personal prosperity in religion: with great zeal and boldness; with the Spirit's aid; with the grace of Jesus; and with extended success. Let your minister never, never be forgotten. Thus will you prove that you highly esteem him in love, &c. Now I come briefly to notice,

II. *The Principles by which their Duty may be enforced.*

"I beseech," &c.

1. From the advantages you will derive from such a course yourselves.

Much of your improvement, instruction, and comfort depend upon your minister. He cannot be a wise and efficient minister without your advantage being promoted. In this way, then, promote his and your own happiness at the same time.

2. I beseech you for the church's sake.

If you undervalue and despise, the church will suffer; the garden of the Lord will become a waste; he will be unfitted to edify, and desolation will reign in Zion. Oh, then, by the love you possess to the cause of Jesus, and as you would deprecate the engraving of Ichabod on the portals of its doors, "Know them," &c.

3. I beseech you for the sake of the world who are without.

Enemies will watch you to scoff and revile, and if they see you in distraction, they will be hardened, and their bonds confirmed. Inquirers will be repelled, and the movements of the cross of Christ retarded.

4. I beseech you for Jesus Christ's sake.

You are his visible disciples, his professed friends. Now remember, he will be grieved if you injure or neglect the least of his disciples. "Wo unto him who offends," &c.; how much more if you insult his ambassadors; the servant he has expressly sent to you. He will assuredly regard all as done to himself. Oh, then, by the love you bear to Jesus, &c.

5. I beseech by the momentous results of this union between yourselves and your pastor, &c.

We trust this connection will be for life. The results will be lasting as eternity your minister will preach and act with you as for eternity; you, also, will hear, &c., for eternity. But in one sense, the connection will be dissolved at the judgment day. Bring that solemn day before the light of your imaginations. All the prophets, and apostles, and pastors are before the throne; all are there to be judged, to be rewarded, &c.; and among the myriads of churches and pastors, there will be yours, and your pastor. Would you have him to appear troubled, alarmed, trembling, with but a remnant of the church with him? or would you not have him cheerful, delighted, in rapture, surrounded by a large and holy assembly, and passing with his train, to stand before the Divine Majesty, and while Jesus smiles upon him, and upon you, he says, "Here, Lord," &c. And Christ says, "Well done," &c.

APPLICATION.

1. We say, ratify this service by secret prayer. Go home, and pray that this day's work may be sealed in heaven.

2. Be at peace among yourselves. This must be the atmosphere you must breathe, or the Holy Spirit will not dwell with you, &c. Pray for peace, labor for peace, &c.

SKETCH CCXIX.

THE LORD'S DAY.

"I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day."—*Rev* i. 10.

According to Scripture chronology, it is now nearly six thousand years since God finished the creation of the world. Its history must be deeply affecting to its contemplative inhabitants. The naturalist reads the account of its wonders and phenomena with feelings of delight. The historian traces the revolutions and changes of its kingdoms and empires, with the greatest interest and attention. But no view of our world can be so interesting, or so instructive and useful, as its moral his

ory. How it has stood connected with Jehovah. How he has acted towards it; and the requirements he has demanded from its intelligent inhabitants. God's holy religion, in reference to our world, has been distinguished by three varieties of forms. There was, first of all, what I would call the rural form, which existed from Adam to Moses. God was worshipped in the families of the pious: the altar was erected, and the head of the family presided as its priest and ruler. Secondly, the Levitical form, which existed from Moses to Christ. A large building was now erected by divine command, called the Tabernacle, various orders of men were appointed, and a variety of ceremonies instituted. Then, last of all, here was the Christian form, established by Christ; and which is to last till the end of the world. Here, the rites of the former dispensations were done away. A full revelation was given of the divine mind; and the ministry of the gospel, with its spiritual ordinances were appointed. Now, this evening, we have to consider, the divinity, and binding obligation of a day which Christians have observed, and do observe; and the necessity which exists for continuing to do so. Our subject, then, is the observance of the Lord's day. Let me then observe,

I. *That one Day in seven the Lord did originally demand, and in all Ages it has been yielded to him by his People.*

1. The observance of one day in the week was connected with the first state of the world. Gen. ii. 1–3.

(1) It was woven into the moral code given to Moses. Exod. xx. 8. Not into the ceremonial department.

(2) It was hallowed by Christ's holy example. Luke iv. 16. Now, we are called upon to see the establishment of the Christian dispensation. That could not be until after Christ's resurrection. We shall now perceive the first Christians still regarding one day in each week religiously. That day was the first, and not the seventh. On this day Jesus rose from the dead. His disciples were assembled and he appeared unto them. John xx. 19. On that day week the disciples were again met, &c. Christ also appeared, xx. 26. And we shall now see the disciples meeting for religious worship on the first day.

(1) It is highly probable that the Holy Spirit was given on this day. Day of Pentecost signifies, fiftieth day from the first day of the feast of the Passover; and always happened on the first day of the week.

(2) The disciples came together to worship on this day. Acts xx. 7. See also 1 Cor. xvi. 1, 2.

(3) John calls this the Lord's day. Rev. i. 10. Now, after these remarks, I wish to observe,

1. That the giving to God a seventh of our time has never been abolished.

No part of the moral law has been so. God has the claim now as ever. Man still necessitated to obey.

2. Christ had a right to change the day, &c.

There seem good reasons for it.

(1) Christ is Lord of the sabbath. Mark ii. 28.

(2) Christ rested from his redeeming work on this day. It behooved him to die, and to be buried, and to rise. This day all his work on earth was finished.

(3) This day is more appropriate with the services of the Christian religion. A day consecrated to the Lord. A day of meditation on his person, offices, work, and triumph.

(4) From the days of Christ to the present time, the Lord's day has been sacredly regarded by all devout Christians. Pliny, in writing to the Roman Emperor, respecting the Christians, states, that they met together on the first day of the week, &c.

II. *Let me urge the Propriety of the Observance from several Considerations.*

1. Six days of labor are quite sufficient for the concerns of the world.

Man is destined to labor; but surely six-sevenths is enough for the body. Cattle, land, health of the body, demand it from labor. Already more persons to labor than can obtain it.

2. A seventh of our time is surely little enough to be devoted entirely to religion.

Every day must be a day of prayer, of obedience, &c. Religion includes the care of the soul. Heaven, eternity.

3. Neglect of the Lord's day is ever found connected with irreligion.

Find me a devout, intelligent, holy person, who tramples on God's day. Religion must have time, attention, &c. Enough of the world in the week, &c.

4. A conscientious regard to the Lord's day is ever followed with spiritual improvement and comfort

A holy and spiritual state of mind is produced by the services of God's house. A relish for heavenly things—knowledge is increased—soul established—peace, and joy, &c. Find me a poor, joyless, barren soul, who gives God all his powers and time on this day.

5. The consequence of violating this day, if universally adopted, would be dreadful indeed

All who trade, actually injure, and tax the true Christian. If you have a right to violate the morning, another has the whole forenoon, yea, the whole day. If all did this, Ichabod would be written upon the sanctuaries, and desolation overspread the land. Let me then,

III. *Give you some Advice as to the Observance of this Day.*

(1) Hail its arrival with praise and prayer.

"Welcome, sweet day of rest," &c.

(2) Aim at being in the Spirit, so that you may honor God in all your thoughts and conversation. Isai. lviii. 13.

(3) Let it be a day of goodness and mercy. Try to do good. Look after your families. Avoid worldly visits, &c. Visit the ignorant, sick, &c.

(4) Be punctual in your attendance on the public ordinances of religion, &c. "I was glad," &c

(5) Anticipate the sabbath of heaven. There remains the keeping of a sabbath, &c. What must I know, obtain, and be, to enjoy the heavenly sabbath, &c. "Then we shall see, and hear, and know," &c.

SKETCH CCXX.

THE HELP AND REFUGE OF THE GODLY.

"Because thou hast been my help, therefore in the shadow of thy wings will I rejoice."—*Ps.* lxiii. 7.

I. *The experimental Retrospect.*

"Thou hast been my help." Not only does he acknowledge God as a help, but as *his* help, "*Mine.*" Now, this experience is the common experience of all God's people. Go back to the period of conviction. Remember your sinful, wretched, helpless estate. How were ye healed, delivered, &c.? Who opened your eyes, ears? Whose arm, &c.? You waited upon the Lord, and he heard you, &c. You cried, "Jesus, thou Son of David," &c. Like the woman of Canaan you groaned, "Lord, help me," &c. Remember the various scenes of providential perplexity, &c. How often in straits; how often all has been dreary, &c., barren. Foes risen up. Friends deserted. Bereaved of relations. Prospects blighted, &c. And you said, in the bitterness of your spirit, "Oh, that I had never been born." "All these things make against me." But the Lord rebuked the tempest He turned the stream of your captivity. "At even-tide it was light." Remember the seasons of spiritual distress and anxiety The Christian not always on the mount. Sometimes called to have fellowship with temptation, and darkness of mind. Perhaps, seasons, when the divine character seemed doubtful. Promises uncertain. Hope, not as an anchor firm, but dragging. Peace unsettled. Well, how did you get extricated? By reasoning? No! But you said, "Lord, lead me to the rock," &c. "Lord, help me;" and he did. The sun shone, &c. Darkness vanished. And then you could "read your title clear to mansions in the skies."

II. *His pious Resolution.*

"Therefore," &c.

1. The place of his trust.

"Under the shadow of his wings" Ps xvii. 8; Deut. xxxii. 11; Ruth ii. 12. Now, all that a believer hath is secure beneath the shadow of the divine wings. His person, body and soul; his household; his property; yea, his all.

2. The feelings he would cultivate respecting it.

"Will I rejoice."

1. In the divinity of his refuge.

"Thy." Whatever God is, or does, is supereminently excellent.

2. In the extent of his refuge.

"Shadow of his wings." Spread over immensity. At home, abroad, desert, sea &c., heaven, hades, &c.

3. In the permanency of it.

Not like Jonah's gourd. Not a temporary protection. Everlasting refuge.

4. In the felicity of it.

Wings of light. God is light. Wher he overshadowed Israel, &c

APPLICATION.

1. The Christian's state may be checkered.

2. It assuredly will be safe and happy

SKETCH CCXXI

SPIRITUAL RELIGION

"For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh. —*Phil.* iii. 3.

It was exceedingly difficult for the Jewish converts to free their minds entirely from attachment to the ceremonies and observances of the Mosaic dispensation. Hence some of them were so tenacious, that they were not for holding fellowship with the Gentile Christians, unless they, too, would regard some of the more striking ceremonies of the old dispensation. This state of things was greatly promoted by a number of half-hearted, Judaizing teachers, who with great zeal endeavored to circulate their sentiments abroad. The apostle Paul labored greatly to secure the churches from the influence of these pernicious doctrines. He showed them that Christianity was not a mixture of the old dispensation with some new ordinances and services, but that the old had passed entirely away, to make room for a spiritual economy of which they were but typical. In the text the apostle triumphs in the purity of the Christian principles, and says, "For we are the circumcision," &c. He claims for believers four things:

I. *They are the Circumcision.*

Now, circumcision denoted,

1. Separation from the unbelieving world.

It was first instituted with Abraham, who had been called to go out, &c. And it was the rite which divided the Jewish from the Gentile world. The family of believers, from the family of unbelievers. Thus are all believers called out of the world. They are not of the world. They are separate, and have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness.

2. It was the sign of the covenant God made with Abraham.

Such, therefore, at least, had the external symbol of fellowship with God. See Rom. ix. 4, &c. Now, believers are in a state of covenant with God. They are his people, and he is their God. They have yielded themselves to God. "Body, soul, and spirit," &c.

3. It denoted that change of heart which the grace of God effects.

The cutting of the body affects not the malady of the soul. Now, the affections of the heart must be mortified. The carnal propensities must be cut off in short, the heart of stone must be taken out of our flesh, and a heart given to fear and love him, to walk in his statutes and ordinances, to do them. Col. ii. 11.

II. *They worship God in the Spirit.*

Some do not worship God at all. Some offer him merely bodily worship. Some present to him a lifeless form; but devout believers worship God in the Spirit.

May denote,

1. That the powers of the mind are cheerfully engaged; the understanding, the will, the affections, &c.

The posture of the body is not unimportant. But the state of the mind is preeminently important.

2. With fervor and sincerity.

The soul wholly waiting upon God. "As the heart panteth," &c. Ps. lxxxiv 1, 2. We are to worship God in "spirit and in truth."

3. With the influences and in the strength of the Holy Spirit.

Some think not of divine aid in worship —how differently the apostle felt! "We know not what to pray for," &c. We are to seek for a supply of the Spirit. Be filled with the Spirit. Then we shall hear, and sing, and pray in the Spirit.

III. *They rejoice in Christ Jesus.*

Now, this is a comprehensive statement. But it is chiefly to be understood in contradistinction to those who rejoiced in the law of Moses, and the ceremonies connected with it. Now, in opposition to such a state of mind, believers rejoice,

1. In Christ as the end of the law.

He honored it, magnified it, obeyed it. Met all its demands and penalties; and thus, through faith in him, we are justified from all things, &c.

2. In the graciousness of Christ.

The rigid, inflexible, yet holy law was given by Moses; but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. The law said, Obey and live. Christ said, Believe and be saved repent and obtain mercy.

3. In the provisions of Christ. The law gave no ability, nor allowed of repentance. Christ gives grace to his people, to love and serve him. He imparts the necessary power; and even then, if any man sin, he hath an advocate, &c. And if he confess &c.

4. In the merit and dignity of Christ

O yes, these are the subjects of their joy and boast. God forbid that we should glory, &c. Their hearts and lips exclaim, "Worthy the Lamb," &c. Unto him that loved us, &c.

IV. *We have no confidence in the flesh.*

Do not trust in it, however intellectual, and externally decent,—have no confidence,

1. In its goodness.

They know that in them dwelleth no good thing. That the natural heart is bad —radically, and thoroughly, and altogether. They cry, unclean, unclean, from the crown of the head, &c.

2. In its powers of renovation.

Men might sooner change the aspect of their faces. The Ethiopian his skin; and the leopard his spots, than the heart renew itself. This is the work of Almighty power. We are his workmanship, &c. Born of God.

3. In its ability for works of holiness.

All the way through, it must not be I, but the grace of God that is within me. I am crucified with Christ, &c. "Without me ye can do nothing."

APPLICATION

1 Do you rejoice in Christ. In all things that relate to him. In his cross, commandments and ordinances. This will be the theme of eternal joy in heaven.

2 Guard against self-confidence. All trust must be reposed in Christ. No confidence in any thing but Jesus.

SKETCH CCXXII.

DELIGHT IN GOD'S HOUSE.

PART I.

"For a day in thy courts is better than a thousand. I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness."—*Ps.* lxxxiv. 10

The Psalms of David seem to have been inspired, to aid the people of God in their devotional services. They are so spiritual in their nature, and so diversified in their character, as to suit all seasons, and all circumstances. Do we require being stimulated to private devotion, in the psalms it is written, "Evening, morning, and at noon, will I cry aloud, and God shall hear my voice" And he says, "Seven times a day will I praise thee." Are we languid as to the public exercises of religion? Where shall we go to get our souls inflamed, but to the hallowed and heavenly odes of David? He says in one psalm, "Lord, I have loved," &c. Where do his desires centre? Again, he says, "One thing have I desired," &c. Of what does his soul boast and glory? "Walk about Zion," &c. Ps. xlviii. 12. When was his soul elevated, and his heart gladened? "I was glad when they said," &c. For what will he pray and unceasingly labor? "Peace be within thy walls," &c. Ps. cxxii. 7. All these feelings and desires seem to be collected and concentrated in the psalm where the text is found. His heart must have been absorbed in the day and courts of the Lord. Doubtless, the sabbath was before his eyes, when he exclaimed, "How amiable are thy," &c. Notice,

I. *The Object of the Psalmist's Preference.*

II. *The Grounds on which it may be justified.*

III. *The Signs by which it will be evidenced.*

I. *The Object of the Psalmist's Preference.*

"The house of my God." Heaven is God's house. "In my Father's house," &c. This is his eternal dwelling. A house not fitted up with earthly materials, &c. "For we know that if our earthly house," &c. 2 Cor. v. 1. The term has been applied to places of various kinds, where God has been worshipped by his people. Hence, Jacob at Bethel, with nothing around him but the works of nature; above him the expanded canopy of heaven; beneath his head, a stone for his pillow; yet, here, he had a glorious manifestation of God, and exclaimed, "This is none other," &c. This is the title too, which was given to the tabernacle, a moveable tent erected according to God's plan and directions. To this David alludes. Then, there was the temple erected by Solomon, in the three thousandth year of the world, which stood about 416 years. After this, there was the second temple erected in the year of the world 3483; and which was destroyed forty years after the crucifixion of Christ. The term now belongs to the spiritual church of Christ. See 1 Tim. iii. 15; Heb. x. 21

Every Christian congregation which assembles to worship God, and keep his ordinances, may be truly called, the House of God. Let us then see the beauty and propriety of the appellation as applied to the church of Christ

1. God is the architect of this house.

He who has built all things is God. The same wisdom, power, and goodness, employed in creating the world, is employed in erecting the church. He selects and fits the materials He models them according to his mind. He does all by the instrumentality of his word, and power of his Spirit.

2. God is the head of this house.

It is sometimes spoken of as a kingdom. The Lord is King in Zion—as a household or family—then he is the Father. "I will be a Father," &c. He rules over it—his authority is supreme—he superintends it in all things. Appoints all its ordinances, and officers.

3. He dwells in this house.

"The Lord hath chosen Zion," &c. "My heart, and mine eyes," &c.

(1) Here, he gives audience to his people "I will meet thee," &c. "Draw near to God," &c.

(2) Here, he spreads his banqueting table. He brought me into his banqueting house, &c. Hence, God has said by Isaiah xxv. 6, "In this mountain," &c. Go, says God, the ruler and head of the feast, and say, "Behold, I have prepared my dinner," &c. Matt. xxii. 4.

(3) Here, he both receives and reveals his glory. If we want to see the glory of science, we must go to the arcána of science. The glory of a monarch is exhibited in his palace. The glory of God in his temple. He has said, "I will glorify," &c. Here, he manifests himself—here the riches of grace and mercy are displayed, which are not to be seen in the world. He is glorified in his saints. Here, he is feared, adored, magnified, &c. Here, are the monuments of his saving power; the trophies of his grace; the objects of his love, and sweetest delight. The other branches of the subject we defer.

APPLICATION.

1. Have we a sacred and happy experience of the blessedness of God's house? Can we say what David does? ver. 1. Do we feel as he did? ver. 2. Do we affirm, and have we tasted the truth of ver. 4? Then the text will be expressive of the state of our hearts. "For a day," &c.

2. These feelings and desires can only be cherished by prayer and meditation Seek the holy influence of the Spirit "Come, Holy Spirit, heavenly dove," &c Faith in Christ, and prayer, will secure these holy influences.

SKETCH CCXXIII.

DELIGHT IN GOD'S HOUSE.

PART II.

"For a day in thy courts is better than a thousand. I had rather be a door-keeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness."—*Psalm* lxxxiv. 10.

We have previously spoken of the house of God. We have referred to it historically, and have also shown in some respects why the congregation of worshipping saints may be styled the house of God. But there is a place referred to in the text, in the way of contrast, "The tents of wickedness;" with these we are surrounded; the theatre, the tavern, are indeed such; the profane, prayerless family is such. Now, in these tents Satan is head; sin is the work; misery the predominant feeling. The curse of God is there, no moral beauty there, no verdant plants of righteousness, no flowers of heavenly loveliness, no sacred melody, no settled peace; often they are haters of one another; often hells in miniature, perdition on earth. No wonder then, that the intelligent and holy psalmist should rather prefer the humblest place in the house of God, &c. We proceed then,

II. *To consider the Grounds on which pre-eminent Attachment to God's House may be justified.*

Why did David, and why do all the people of God so ardently love God's house? They do so,

1. Because of the Proprietor of the house. "God."

They love every thing connected with God; his name, his word, his ordinances, his day, his people, and therefore, his house.

2. Because it is their spiritual birthplace.

Children of God. "Of Zion it shall be

said, this man," &c. "Jerusalem from above is the mother of us all." Oh, how sweet is the name of mother! Where was your attention first arrested, your soul alarmed, your fears aroused; where did you first see your peril and misery; and where did the other edge of the divine sword first quicken to righteousness, and prove to you the savor of life, &c. Oh, yes, here you first found your sins to be your burden, and here you were enabled to lay it down at the foot of the cross; here you drank in the balmy sound of the gospel, and when Christ said, "Be it unto thee," &c., you said, "Lord, I believe," &c.

3. Because of the privileges and blessings connected with it.

There are closet privileges, and family privileges, but none equal to those of his house. "The Lord loveth the gates of Zion," &c. Where shall we infallibly meet with the Divine presence? "Wherever two or three," &c. What is the absolute promise to prayer? "Whatever two or three agree to ask," &c. How shall our strength be assuredly renewed? "They that wait upon the Lord," &c. Do you not remember, after that scene of affliction, how refreshed ye were by the dews of Zion? After that scene of trouble and bereavement of your friends or children, &c. When you felt your increasing weakness and approach to death, how, in the house of God, you were comforted, and enabled to rejoice in God. Oh, yes! it is in God's house where the saints grow and ripen for eternal glory.

4. Because of the society with whom we mingle.

God has implanted the social feelings deeply in our nature. Men have ever moved in masses. Hence, in science, or literature, pleasure, you see men associated together; all classes of men have found out, that society is essential to the enjoyment of life; this principle, religion cherishes and sanctifies; the church is truly a social compact. Now, the Christian knows his spark will be brighter, when mixed with those of the congregation. A confluence of streams make the river of life deeper and wide; a number of sounds are necessary to harmony; of tints and hues to beauty. "How good and pleasant it is to dwell," &c.; and to unite to worship the Lord of Hosts together "I am a companion of all," &c

5. Because of its influence in making us meet for glory.

Nowhere are we more reminded of the glory and greatness of God; nowhere are we brought to feel our sinfulness and unworthiness, nowhere is Christ's cross more conspicuous, time more transitory, world more empty, death less dreaded, or eternity more desired. In God's house you are instructed for heaven, disciplined for heaven; you will have similar things in heaven; gospel, praise, united, public and eternal worship. The house of God is the gate and entrance of heaven. Such then, are the reasons of this preference. Let us glance,

III. *At the Signs by which our Preference to God's house will be evinced.*

1. By cheerful and regular attendance.

Laws and rules are unnecessary to make us do what is delightful to us. Our forefathers were fined and imprisoned for it, and yet they went up to God's house. Nothing can compensate for irregular attendance.

2. Exertion for its support.

Self-denial is the unerring test. You may give what you do not want, what you will never feel. No self-denial in this: what have you sacrificed?

3. Prayers for its prosperity.

Pray for the peace, &c.,

"My soul shall pray for Zion still."

At the family altar, closet, everywhere.

APPLICATION.

1. Some of you feel the sentiments of the text.

2. Some of you give it a secondary degree of attention.

3. I fear some of you care nothing about it.

SKETCH CCXXIV

WALKING IN TRUTH

"For I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in the truth."—1 *John* iii. 4.

CHRISTIAN ministers are often represented as the fathers of those who are converted through their ministry. Hence Paul's declaration, 1 Cor. iv. 15. So of Timothy also, whom he calls his son in the gospel. Now, we expect the parent

to be solicitous for the welfare of his child; parental affection will of necessi v produce it. The same will apply to the Christian ministry. Hence, what anxieties the apostles displayed for the spiritual welfare of their flocks, &c. See Gal. iv. 19.

I. *What is it to walk in Truth.*

1. Sacred attachment to the doctrines of the gospel.

All error dangerous; some essentially.

2. Sincerity of conduct, in opposition to mere profession and guile.

3. A closer walk and conformity to the spirit of Christ.

He is truth, &c.

II. *The means by which it may be promoted.*

1. A close acquaintance with the word of truth.

"Let the word," &c.

2. A rigid regard to the ordinances of the truth.

They that wait upon the Lord, &c.

3. Fervent prayer to the God of truth.

III. *The Motives by which we should be influenced*

1. Christ's sake.

2. Church's sake.

3. Our own sake.

Safety, comfort, usefulness, future glory.

SKETCH CCXXV.

MAN'S INSUFFICIENCY TO DIRECT HIS STEPS.

"It is not in man that walketh to direct his steps."—*Jer.* x. 23.

A GREAT deal has been written for and against the freedom of the human will. Some have contended that man is a machine, and moves only as he is acted upon. In connection with this, it has been taught that all things are inevitably fixed, and all things happen of necessity. It must be seen that this at once destroys man's responsibility, and lays the cause of all events at the foot of God's throne. Nothing is more clear, than the Scriptures everywhere treat man as a free moral agent. God addresses him as such; as such he calls him to consider, to return, to repent, to believe and obey him. On this principle, he threatens punishment and offers rewards; and God says to every man, "If thou doest well," &c. Now, while all this is true, yet it is quite clear that all the movements of man are under the providential government of God. God has the hearts of all men in his hand, and all their ways a his disposal. In this sense the way of man is not in himself, &c.

I. *Let us explain and confirm the Truth of the Text.*

II. *Refer you to several Scriptural Illustrations of it.*

I. *Explain and confirm the Truth of the Text.*

1. He cannot direct, &c., because of his short-sightedness.

Man in his most improved state, is exceedingly ignorant. What can he know? He may have some faint remembrance of the past, some faint conception of the present, but of the future he has no knowledge whatever; he has nothing to guide him; nothing to penetrate the veil; he cannot draw it aside; all is dark, &c. "No man can tell what a day," &c. How clear then, that, "It is not in man." The truth of the text is obvious, &c.

2. From the feebleness of man.

If he has to direct his own steps, he should be able to command circumstances, and to produce such effects as he desires But man has no such power; there may be difficulties in his path which he cannot remove; dangers he cannot avert; enemies he cannot overcome. Man's resources are those of a worm, &c.

3. From the evanescence of man

Man is but the creature of a day; his breath is in his nostrils; he stands on the brink of the grave; he cannot make his own heart heave; he cannot cause one pulse to beat; he cannot command the means of existence for one instant; he lives, moves, and has his being in God every moment. How, then, can he direct his own steps? Now,

II. *Notice several Scriptural Illustrations.*

1. See it in the case of the preservation of Moses.

His parents desired to save his life. At last he is conveyed to the water; there, in a fragile ark, he is left floating on the waters. Who can trace the subsequent history, and not perceive a forcible illustration of the text.

2. See it in the history of Joseph.

He is sent on a message of kindness to

his brethren. Then, observe the malevolent purpose of those brethren. Now, here we see the designs of Jacob and Joseph, and of the brethren going in opposite directions. God, by an under-current, overruled the whole, and effected his own mind.

3. See it in the history of Naaman.

A captive Israelitish maid becomes a ervant in the house of the leper, here she refers to the prophet in Israel, and it leads to the recovery of her master.

4 See it in the death of Jesus.

See Acts ii. 23. The scribes, &c., haed him; plot to destroy him; try, condemn, and put him to death. In all this, they consulted only their prejudices, and wicked and envious hearts; yet God so overruled it, that they just did that which God had predetermined should be done.

APPLICATION.

This subject should lead us,

1. To commit all our concerns into the hands of God; every thing then will be right, and for the best; he will do all things well

2. It should greatly tend to deliver us from the fear of man. However potent and malignant our enemies may be, God can counteract all their plans, overrule all their machinations; "He maketh the wrath of man," &c. He that fears and trusts in God, need not fear all the men in the world.

3. It should produce a spirit of moderation both as to the fears and hopes of life. The darkest seasons he can enlighten, bitterest cup sweeten, the brightest day turn into a night of adversity.

4 Let us constantly honor Jesus, as the moral Governor of the world; by praise in prosperity; by prayer in all things, &c.

SKETCH CCXXVI.

THE BELIEVER'S ALL-SUFFICIENCY IN CHRIST.

"I can do all things through Christ, which strengtheneth me"—*Philip.* iv. 13.

THE Christian, in his way to glory, must guard agains' two sources of danger; self-confidence and despondency. They are the opposite extremes, yet the Christian is exposed to both of them. The Christian should despond as to self in every thing and he should be confident as to all things in and through Christ. This is delightfully expressed in the text,

I. *The Christian's Sufficiency for all things.*

"I can do all things," &c. This of course is to be confined to all things God and religion require.

1. The Christian can perform all duties.

None beyond his ability. Perhaps to love our enemies; the greatest, &c.; yet Stephen did this, so did Paul.

2. The Christian can make all sacrifices.

Abraham left his country. Moses abandoned the court of Pharaoh. Daniel. Paul ready to be offered up.

3. The Christian can resist all temptations

Temptations to wealth, honor, pleasure.

4. Can overcome all enemies.

Vanquish Satan. Have the victory over the world. Crucify self. Triumph over death.

II. *The Source of the Christian's Sufficiency.*

"Through Christ," &c. Christ is the depositary of all the good the soul can enjoy. Full of grace and truth. In him is also eternal life.

1. He is the strength of the soul, as bread is the support of the body.

"I am the," &c.

2. He is the strength of the soul, as the trunk is the strength of the branches.

"I am the true vine," &c.

3. He is the strength of the soul, as the foundation is the support of the building.

"Behold, I lay in Zion," &c.

4. He is the strength of the soul, as life is necessary to action.

"Christ your life," &c. Now, mark how Christ communicates this strength to his people.

(1) By his word. Word is compared to honey. To food. To a feast, &c.

(2) By his ordinances. Here he meets them and supplies their need. "They that wait upon the Lord," &c.

(3) By his Spirit's gracious influence; comforting, cheering, assisting, &c. In all things, we obtain this strength by believing prayer. "In all things by prayer &c.

APPLICATION.

1. Here is a solid basis for Christian hope and confidence.

2. Here is solace in every scene of trial and suffering.

SKETCH CCXXVII.

SUPREME LOVE TO GOD.

"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind This is the first and great commandment."—*Matt* xxii. 37, 38.

I. *Let us explain and illustrate the Duty.*

II. *Enforce it upon your practical Attention.*

I. *Let us explain and illustrate the Duty.*

Now here are three things, the nature, degree, and evidences of love to God.

1. The nature of love to God.

(1) There must be first a true knowledge of God. The mind must be acquainted with him.

(2) There must be approbation of God. Many objects when known are despised.

(3) There must be esteem, so approved as to be esteemed.

(4) Attachment to God. A feeling of affection.

(5) Delight in God; warm glowing affection; that which gives the soul satisfaction, pleasure, and joy in God. The mind drawn to him, united to him, &c.

2. The degree of love specified in the text.

(1) With all our hearts; with all the affections we possess; all our passions going out after God; so that our hearts are comparatively cold to every thing else.

(2) With all our soul or life; life devoted to him. Consider this as the essence, as the sweetness, as the end of life.

3. With all our mind.

So as to fix our mental powers upon him; make him the great object of study, of contemplation, remembrance. Superlatively; soul absorbed with God. Let us consider the evidences of this love. How is it to be manifested to ourselves and to others, that we thus love God? that is, with all our heart, soul, and mind.

(1) God will be in all our thoughts; our first thoughts, day thoughts, night thoughts; our meditation of him will be sweet.

(2) Communion with him will be our delight; cannot be too near, too close, and distance will be wretchedness, misery, be deplored, &c.

(3) We shall be jealous for his honor. As we adore and extol, so we shall desire others. Hallowed be thy name.

(4) Our mouths will be filled with his praise; we shall extol and bless and magnify, &c.; from the fulness of the heart, &c.

(5) We shall always be concerned to please him. Speak, Lord, &c. Run in the way of his statutes with delight, &c Set the Lord always before us

(6) We shall be unfeignedly attached to his people; love his image wherever we see it, whether rich or poor, with sincerity, &c.

(7) There will be an entire, and unreserved consecration of ourselves to his service; can keep nothing back; he will have our heart, soul, and mind. What have we left? Our time, our talents, our wealth, our ease, yea, life cannot be refused. Sin abandoned; self annihilated; suffering cheerfully endured, death welcomed, &c These then are the evidences.

II. *Let us enforce it upon your practical Attention.*

1. God is infinitely lovely in himself.

All that is beautiful, all that is excellent, is in God; in God to an infinite degree. Without mixture. Highest intelligence of sublime grandeur and glory.

2. Our relative connection with him demands it.

"Thy God," who fashioned thee in secret, who wrote all thy members in his book, who gave thee life and all things to enjoy; who made thee a man, not a brute; an intelligent man, not an idiot; who made the events of thy birth so favorable to thy happiness; placed thee in a land of vision; gave thee thy lot in a rich and pleasant place, &c.; "thy God," on whom thou dependest for all things; who holds thee in his hand; blesses thee from day to day Who has all thy concerns under his immediate control; "Thy God," who redeemed thee from destruction; who so loved the world, &c.; whose responsible agent thou art; who numbers all thy actions; watches all thy steps; knows all thy thoughts, and who will bring thee into judgment and decide thy destiny forever.

3. Our eternal necessities, which God alone can supply, demand it.

No creature can ever be independent: angels are not; Adam was not; in heaven all are dependent. The soul will exist forever. Now only one thing can ever make it happy: change of place cannot; nor society, nor employment. God's favor, the light of his heavenly countenance, all you need will follow this. Then there is a claim upon your love as long as eternity.

APPLICATION.

1. Congratulate those who love God; rejoice; abound in love, &c.

2. Encourage those who desire to love him.

3. Reason with the enemies of God. What iniquity, what ingratitude, what folly, what eternally direful effects.

SKETCH CCXXVIII.

PARABLE OF THE HIDDEN TREASURE.

"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field; the which when a man hath found he hideth, and for joy thereof, goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field."—*Matt.* xiii. 44.

HERE, the Redeemer is illustrating the nature of his kingdom, and the blessings of his gospel, by a great variety of beautiful and interesting metaphors; and these metaphors are as simple and familiar, as they are beautiful and interesting. He refers to the grain of mustard-seed—to the leaven—to the fisherman and his net; and in the text to hidden treasure, &c. Notice,

I. *In what Sense the Blessings of the Gospel may be likened to a Treasure.*

The idea of a treasure is often presented to us in the Holy Scriptures. Paul speaks of preaching the unsearchable riches of Christ. "This treasure we have in earthen vessels," &c. Now, earthly treasure enables its possessor to supply his temporal wants, and is supposed to elevate to a more honorable station in society. Gospel treasure really and truly confers these advantages. In the gospel there is a full supply of all our need. The bread of life. The robe of salvation. "A balsam for our every wound," &c. It confers moral dignity upon its possessor. See Solomon's account, Prov. iv. 7–9. Now, its treasure,

1. Is divine and heavenly.

Not a gross metal dug out of the earth, this is light from above, wisdom from above. A river that flows from the midst of the throne of God and the Lamb. Being heavenly, moth and rust do not corrupt it, nor can thieves break through and steal it.

2. It is spiritual treasure.

Not such as the rich worldling had. Adapted to the nature and powers of the mind; "Why spend your money," &c Isai. lv. 2.

3. It is satisfying treasure.

Temporal treasure cannot satisfy—fills with anxieties and fears. This removes want, appeases the anxieties of the mind, &c. "The Lord is my portion," &c

4. It is everlasting.

A man gathers riches, but he may lose them; at death he leaves all behind. "We brought nothing into this world," &c. Now, this he shall retain in death, judgment, and eternity. "I know that safe with him remains, protected by his power," &c. Durable riches, of righteousness.

II. *In what Respects these Riches were hidden.*

They were hid,

1. In the counsels of God before the foundation of the world.

Eph. iii. 9–11; Col. i. 26.

2. They were hidden under the shadows and types of the ancient dispensations.

Col. ii. 17; Heb. x. 1.

3. These treasures are still hidden in the gospel to those who remain in unbelief.

You had the Scriptures and the gospel, but you were ignorant of the treasure they contained. Now, here is a sort of paradox. The gospel is a revelation. Yet, sight is as necessary as light, to discern objects Blindness is the condition of all men Lord, open thou mine eyes that I may see wondrous things out of thy law.

III. *The Description of the Manner in which these Treasures are possessed.*

1. The gospel is received.

"Buyeth the field." We cannot give an equivalent. No real price to give But we are called to buy, "Without money and without price." But still, we cannot have the gospel field, without giving up our imaginary riches, self-esteem self

righteousness; love of the world; evil associates, and principles, and practices. We must, in fact, surrender all. Be shipwrecked, before the life-boat of the gospel will receive us. Jesus says, forsake all and follow me. We must be insolvents before he will enrich us.

2. The possession of this treasure produceth joy.

The conversion of the soul is the most exalted ground of joy He says, I was in a horrible pit, &c. I was poor, naked, blind, condemned, perishing. Now, I am on the rock of eternal ages. Now, I am clothed, rich, have eye-sight, am justified. The penitent sows in tears, but reaps in joy. He mourns, but is comforted. He has had appointed unto him, "The oil of joy for mourning," &c. He says, "The Lord was angry with me," &c.

3. He lays this treasure up and secureth it.

This treasure, through carelessness, may be lost; therefore, he is to watch and hold fast. Satan and the world will try to rob him. But he is not to sell the truth. To take care that no one seize his crown.

APPLICATION.

1. Invite the spiritually poor to be rich. How easy the mode—how precious the treasure.

2. Urge believers to increase in spiritual riches. Dig in the field. One vast mine. O explore it. It is invaluable—eternally inexhaustible.

SKETCH CCXXIX.

PAUL OBTAINING MERCY

"Howbeit, for this cause I obtained mercy."—1 *Tim.* i. 16.

The two great rocks on which thousands suffer the shipwreck of their souls, are presumption and despair. Many presume on account of the mercy and goodness of God. "Because sentence against an evil work," &c. They imagine God to be entirely indifferent to human actions, or think he is such a one as themselves. Others, again, are kept from God's favor through despondency. They have overwhelming views of the evil of their state, and despair of the grace of God being sufficient for their salvation. Now, while this is a state of mind exceedingly painful, and deserving our sympathy, yet, it is so connected with unbelief as to be exceedingly offensive to God. You fear God will not save you. Why, what shall he do to convince of his gracious regards towards you? He has given you his word, oath his messengers, yea, his own Son. "And if God spared not his own Son," &c. To encourage the inquiring sinner he has also given astonishing examples of his saving power. There is Manasseh, and Nebuchadnezzar, in the Old Testament; and there is Mary Magdalene, the dying thief, and Saul of Tarsus, in the New. The last is the subject of the text. Hence, he says, "Howbeit, for this cause," &c. Let us consider,

I. *The apparent Difficulties in the way of Saul finding Mercy.*

In the previous verse he calls himself the chief of sinners.

1. He was entirely ignorant of the plan of salvation.

He was a Pharisee in heart, profession, and life. No idea that he was a sinner—no idea of divine mercy—no idea of contrition, of self-abasement. He trusted in his own righteousness, in the goodness of his own heart. Now, there is but one plan of salvation. Through the mercy of God, and by faith in the Messiah.

2. He was an unbeliever.

He lived at a most eventful crisis. Just when the Spirit had been poured down from on high. The events concerning Jesus and his crucifixion, together with the doctrines of the apostles, must have been familiar to him. Yet, like thousands of his countrymen, he closed his eyes against the light—his ears against the truth; and his heart against the influences of the gospel.

3. He was a blasphemer.

See ver. 18. Openly vilified the name of Jesus. Vented his hatred to Christ by associating his name with evil. Might perhaps speak of him as being accursed of God, or as his countrymen before him say he had a devil, &c.

4. He was a bitter persecutor.

His soul burned with unhallowed zeal against Christ and his cause. It is said he breathed threatenings against the disciples, Acts ix. 1. His soul was inflamed with the fire of hellish hate, &c. See Acts xxvi. 9–11, and xxii. 4 also viii. 3

He was one who saw the first martyrs in Christ's cause expire. See vii. 57–59.

5. He was injurious.

This we have already exemplified in his character as a persecutor; but it is likely that, in addition to all this, he blasted the reputation of the saints, and thus sacrificed their good names, as well as their property, liberty, and life. Or, it may signify, that as a persecutor, he was remarkably successful in distressing and injuring the friends of Christ. Such, then, were the apparent difficulties in the way of Paul's conversion. Observe,

II. *The Mercy which he obtained.*

Mercy is the exercise of favor to the guilty and unworthy.

1. He obtained sparing mercy.

God showed forth all long-suffering. Contrast his case with that of the proud Pharaoh; the impious Herod; the apostate Julian. God did not smite him with his wrath, &c.

2. He obtained pardoning mercy.

God forgave all his sin. His mountain of iniquity became a plain. Jesus saved him from all his guilt. Blotted it out as a cloud, &c.

3. He obtained renewing mercy.

That which changed him; gave him a new heart; made him entirely a new creature. Now, a friend—now, no longer a vulture, but a dove—not a destroying lion, but a lamb.

4. He obtained exalting, distinguishing mercy.

Sin had plunged him deeply into wretchedness and misery. The grace of God exalted him as highly.

(1) He was exalted in knowledge.

(2) He was exalted in office—became an apostle.

(3) In rich Christian experience.

(4) In extensive usefulness.

5. He obtained sustaining and preserving mercy.

He had many foes, many dangers, many sufferings; yet he was saved — saved through all; and his end was happy and triumphant.

III. *The great Ends Christ had in view in imparting Mercy to Paul.*

1. He exhibited his own long-suffering.

How easily he could have disarmed the mad youth. How easily have broken him in pieces as a potter's vessel. But his bowels yearned over him. His patience prevailed, &c. He was not indifferent—no! he felt every attack as done to himself, &c.

2. He exhibited the freeness and power of his grace.

To whom will he now deny it? On whom can it prove ineffectual when it has saved Paul?

3. As a pattern of the way of salvation to all.

Jesus saved Paul. He saved him through faith, repentance, baptism, and obedience. See chap. ix. 8–19.

APPLICATION.

Learn,

1. The sovereign power and grace of God. All resources and instruments are his. "He maketh his enemies," &c.

2. The encouragement the subject affords to the greatest of sinners. Yes, Jesus died for the chief of sinners. None need despair.

3. The connection of faith with eternal glory.

4. The great business of believers. To magnify divine grace. Let us sing of divine mercy. Talk of it. Recommend it.

SKETCH CCXXX.

THE JAILER AND HIS HOUSE.

"And they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house. And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes; and was baptized, he and all his, straightway. And when he had brought them into his house, he set meat before them, and rejoiced, believing in God, with all his house."—*Acts* xvi 32–34.

The occasion of Paul visiting Philippi, was a vision which he had at Troas. See ver. 9. Upon this, Paul and Silas immediately obeyed the call, and directed their steps to Philippi. Here Lydia became the first-fruit of their labors, and most probably the first convert to the faith of the gospel in the European quarter of the world. The interesting account of her conversion is given from the thirteenth to the fifteenth verse. After this, the apostles met a young woman who was possessed with a spirit of divination, who brought her masters much gain by soothsaying. No sooner did she see Paul and his companions than she followed them up

and down the city for several days, crying, 'These men are the servants," &c., ver. 17. Paul expelled the evil spirit in the name of Jesus, upon which, her masters seeing the hope of their gain was gone, had Paul and Silas arrested, and taken before the magistrates of the city. See ver. 20–24. Being cast into prison, we have a detail of the events which occurred there. There were Paul and Silas with lacerated backs in the inner prison, with their feet fast in the stocks. Yet they were happy. They rejoiced in tribulation. Hence, at midnight, they sung praises to God. Happy in a prison. Joyful at midnight. Though sorrowful, yet always rejoicing. At eventide, it was light. The righteous have joy in their dwellings, whether it be a palace or a dungeon. Then, there was the earthquake. See ver. 26. The jailer was alarmed, and resolved to destroy himself, and drew his sword for that purpose, supposing all the prisoners were fled. Then notice Paul's pacifying address. "Do thyself no harm." Then, the jailer's mind became extremely alarmed, and anxious; and he put that most momentous of all questions, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" The great reply was, "Believe," &c. Then follows the text, &c.

I. *The Subject of apostolic Teaching.*

The jailer was an alarmed, anxious inquirer. The apostle had made known the great cardinal doctrine of faith; and, now, this is carried out in further teaching him. His theme was the "Word of the Lord." No doubt that gospel which Jesus had commanded to be preached through all the world, and to every creature. Now, the word of the Lord is the only remedy for the misery and danger of the sinner.

1. The sinner is in darkness, and it is the word of revelation.

Life and immortality are brought to light by the gospel. "As a light shineth," &c. It solves all mysteries, removes all doubts, and satisfies every anxious desire of the mind.

2. The sinner is in guilt, and under condemnation; and it is the word of pardon.

It makes known the remission of sins in the name of Christ. It proclaims that Christ came not to condemn the world, &c. "All manner of sin," &c.

3. The sinner is unholy, and it is the word of sanctification.

By the incorruptible seed of the word of God, are believers born again. It is the instrument in the hands of the Spirit of regeneration. It also builds up and sanctifies. "I commend you to God, and the word of his grace," &c. "Sanctify them by thy truth," &c.

4. The sinner is responsible, and it is the word of duty, of practical righteousness.

Here, the ordinances of God are specified. Here, all the duties of Christianity are exhibited. Here, the whole course to heaven is prescribed. It is the unerring guide to glory. Notice, then,

II. *The Effects which this Teaching produced.*

1. It produced faith.

They believed the word of the Lord. They received the record God had given of his Son. They, doubtless, believed in his name, and received Christ into their hearts. Now, the word of God cannot do us good without this. This is the application of its blessings to our soul. It is the hand receiving the gift. The eye that beholds the Saviour. The feet which ran into the city of refuge. The soul resting on the Rock of ages.

2. It produced profession.

Having believed in Christ, they put Jesus on, by being baptized. Now, this is Christ's order of things. Faith, then baptism. Reception of Christ, then confession of him. Now, it is probable that those who were baptized, generally confessed Christ at the time. Hence, see Rom. x. 9.

3. It produced affection and generosity.

What a reverse of feeling and conduct! He washes their stripes. Hospitably entertained them, &c.

4. It produced happiness and joy.

"Rejoiced in God." Many reasons for this joy. His condition was happily reversed. He was before dark, in peril, wretched, &c. Now, he was light in the Lord. Found salvation; and was full of peace through believing. Now, see the connection between all these. The word should produce faith—faith, confession by baptism—baptism, be followed by a new life; and the whole associated with joy and peace in the Holy Ghost.

APPLICATION.

Let me address four descriptions of hearers.

1. Some who have never thought of being saved.

2. Some who think occasionally, but do not strive or determine.

3. Sincere inquirers. We address you as Paul did. Same Saviour, &c., for you. Now, exercise faith. Now confess him, and be saved.

4. Professed believers and disciples. Behold your duty. Be kind, be hospitable. Abound in good works. See your privilege. Rejoice in God, always and increasingly.

SKETCH CCXXXI.

CHRIST'S ADDRESS TO THE THIRSTY.

"In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink. He that believeth on me, as the Scripture hath said; out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water."—*John* vii. 37, 38.

The Jewish dispensation was crowded with sacrifices, ordinances, and festivals; most of these had a twofold reference; a literal one, connected with the circumstances of their institution, and a typical one, referring to the Messiah, and the blessings of the gospel. One of these feasts was called the feast of tabernacles; it was appointed to commence on the 15th of the 7th month, that is, September, and it was to last seven days. Its designs, &c., are fully described in Levit. xxiii. 39, &c. It seems the Jews had added to its ceremonies; for on the last great day of the feast, they went to the pool of Siloam, and fetched water; a part of which they drank, and the rest they poured upon the altar, in remembrance of the water supplied unto them in the desert. Jesus was present at the feast, and amidst the congregated thousands, he stood up and cried, "If any man thirst," &c. Notice, —the Speaker,—the Address,—the Promises.

I. *The Speaker.*

"Jesus stood up," &c. Remember, my friends, it was at the conclusion of this address, that the officers turned and exclaimed, "Never man spake," &c. Let me refer you,

1. To the dignity of the speaker's person.

"God who at sundry times," &c Some of those persons were of distinguished celebrity; Moses, Elijah, Samuel, &c. Christ's harbinger. But they were servants in God's house. But, last of all, God spake to us by his own coequal and coessential Son; a greater than Moses &c.; one of whom the Baptist truly said, that the latchet of his shoes he was not worthy to unloose.

2. His infallibility and infinite knowledge.

He knew all things; he could not err, he saw the circumstances and feelings of all his hearers; he knew what they required; his discourses were always, therefore, direct; he never drew the bow at a venture. Observe,

3. His mode of communication. Now,

(1) It was always tender and gracious "A bruised reed," &c. "Thou art fairer," &c. "Grace is poured," &c. "Grace and truth," &c.

(2) It was always plain and easy. He never dealt in the profound; never quoted one deep saying from the ancients; no metaphysics, no glossing, &c., no pompous terms; he simplified all he touched; he led the people to the garden, the field, the sheepfold, &c. Hence, the poor and the illiterate were instructed and delighted, and "the common people heard him gladly."

(3) It was always faithful and earnest He never varnished over the condition of any of his hearers. See how he searched to the bottom of the hearts of the scribes and Pharisees. And how earnest and intent he was; it was his meat and his drink, &c. He taught, and wrought miracles all day, and then retired, and wept, and prayed all night. He was eaten up with zeal to execute the work he came to effect. He was the preacher of all times, all places, and to all classes. Notice,

II. *The Address.*

"He stood up," &c. Now this address is,

1. To the thirsty.

Appetites of the body are used to set forth the desires of the soul. We read of hungering and thirsting after righteousness. Thirst is an extremely painful, and even fatal sensation, if not removed. This clearly exhibits the state of sinners. They are in a needy, wretched condition; sin, like a fever, is burning up the soul; there is no comfort, nor peace, &c.; as such like the thirsty, they desire relief Hence

hey go up and down, saying, "who will show us any good?" Now, this wilderness world yields no pure, refreshing stream, its waters are all noxious and foul. Notice,

2. Jesus announces to the thirsty—water.

"Let him come unto me and drink." Now, by this water we understand, the gracious influences of his Holy Spirit.

(1) Now, these, like water, assuage thirst; these satisfy the soul; pain, and anxiety, and dread are removed. Now the soul exclaims, "I have found the Messiah," "I have found him of whom Moses," &c.

(2) It revives, refreshes, and strengthens. The poor fainting, dying soul drinks and lives, becomes strong and joyful in Christ, the author of his salvation.

(3) Like water, the grace and influences of the Spirit cleanse and purify; remove pollution. "I will sprinkle clean water," &c. Produces holy fruits, &c. In Christ's address,

3. The thirsty are invited to come to Christ for this water.

(1) Christ only can bestow it. He has he Spirit; he obtained it, &c.; he bestows, &c. Great importance in the words, "Let him come unto me."

(2) To come to Christ is to believe in him; to receive him as the Son of God, and the Saviour of the world; to build upon him as such, &c.

(3) There is to be actual participation. "And drink." Apply to our souls the fulness of Christ's benefits and blessings. Come to the cross, and look up; to the fountain, and plunge into it; to the table and eat; to the foundation, and build. Observe,

III. *The Promise.*

1. Christ shall give him the water of life.

He will impart what he needs; give him pardoning grace, adopting grace, &c., sanctifying grace; in one word, salvation.

2. He will give him a full and abiding supply.

This is the idea in the text, and clearly expressed, John iv. 14. "Spirit shall be in him."

3. The grace imparted shall be useful, and a blessing to others.

"Out of his midst, or heart, shall flow," &c. Piety is influential. God blesses a man that he may be a blessing. The converted soul says, "Lord, what wouldst thou," &c. "What shall I render," &c Then the influence of godliness; flows out He honors Christ; brings others to Christ talks of Christ by the way.

"Oh, then he tells to sinners round," &c

His streams flow here and there, &c. He glories God with his body, &c.

APPLICATION.

1. Many of you have proved the truth of the text. Celebrate the praises of Christ. Bless the Lord who healeth all your diseases, &c.

2. Urge sinners to come to Christ. Come now; come just as you are; come with the sinner's plea.

3. Christians, be useful Let your piety flow out.

SKETCH CCXXXII.

THE CHRISTIAN WARFARE.

"War a good warfare."—1 *Tim.* i. 18.

War is a word pregnant with horror it is associated with all that is disastrous terrible, and horrific. David thus prayed, "O God, scatter the people who delight in war." Who can describe the wretchedness, wo, and wailings, war hath produced on our earth? The earth has been made to groan to its centre, and its surface has been crimsoned with human blood. War rushed into our world through the passage which sin had opened, and it has run parallel with all ages, until the present hour. It is, however, doomed to have a sure and everlasting termination. Hence, Isaiah has predicted, "When they shall beat their swords," &c., Isa. ii 4. Every benevolent heart will pray, Lord, hasten it in thine own time! Revelation directs our attention to a warfare carried on by Satan, and his host of angels, against God, see Rev. xii. 7. Now, this he still wages against God and his saints on earth. This warfare shall also be brought to a glorious and final issue, Rev. xx. 1–10. Now, in this conflict, all human beings on earth are concerned, and deeply interested. All unrenewed persons who are in their sins and unbelief, are allied with the powers of hell, and are fighting against God and his Anointed Hence, sinners are described

as enemies to God; as rebels, &c. Now, this is a warfare of the most base and infatuated character. "Wo unto him that striveth." The result must be ruinous to the sinner. The Lord will destroy such with the breath of his mouth, and with the brightness of his coming. Now, the saints of God, all who have been renewed in their minds by the Spirit and grace of God, have to resist these spiritual foes, and are engaged under Jesus, to contend against the powers of Satan, and to "war a good warfare."

I. *Let us describe the Christian Warfare.*

II. *Advert to its declared Excellency.*

III. *Urge it upon your personal and practical Attention.*

"War," &c.

I. *Let us describe the Christian Warfare.*

A warfare,

1. Implies enemies.

Now, the enemies against whom we have to contend, are threefold.

(1) Satan and the powers of darkness. Called Satan, adversary, Abaddon the destroyer; compared to a roaring lion, &c. Now, this class of enemies are invisible, being spirits; have access to our souls; numerous, they throng the air, &c., powerful, ever active, and hold countless myriads under their power. Now, we read of the wiles of the devil, Eph. vi. 11; of the fiery darts of the wicked one, Eph. vi. 16; and of the snares of the devil, 1 Tim. v. 7.

(2) There is the world in its numerous evils. Now, at present it is Satan's seat and empire; "the god of this world;" the world is fallen, in arms against God, full of snares, &c. "The friendship of the world," &c. Hence, Christ's prayer, "I pray not," &c. The apostle said, "The world is crucified to me," &c. Its maxims, pleasures, riches, company, &c.; its smiles and allurements; its frowns and attacks.

(3) The human heart. Naturally against God, and indisposed to all good, Rom. ix. 18. "In me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing" Now, this heart must be subjected to divine grace, mortified, made progressively wiser and holier. "Sanctified wholly," &c. A warfare,

2. Implies weapons.

Now, these are referred to, Eph. vi. 13. There must be distinctly taken up hereafter.

3. It includes active conflict.

Christians are not soldiers in the camp at ease, or in the city in peace, but in the field. When converted, their carnal weapons are thrown aside, and they receive the panoply divine, the whole armor of God It begins with the Christian life, and progresses with it, and only ends at the hour of death. It is a daily warfare, a constant conflict, an incessant struggle Let us,

II. *Advert to its declared Excellency*

"Good warfare."

1. It is a warfare in a good cause.

Truth and righteousness are its basis. Cause, holiness against sin; of truth against error; of happiness against misery; of God against Satan; of heaven against hell; of salvation against destruction.

2. It is a warfare under a good Captain.

Christ is the Captain of salvation. He possesses every illustrious qualification; infinite skill, omnipotent power, invincible courage, &c., unbounded affection and tenderness for his troops.

3. It is a warfare possessing good resources. Abundant ammunition, exhaustless provisions, and accessible fortresses of security in every hour of peril.

4. It is a warfare presenting the most delightful and glorious prospect.

Safety is guarantied; victory is pledged; and immortality and eternal life promised. Let us,

III. *Urge it upon your personal and practical Attention.*

1. In this warfare you are to be individually engaged.

All offices in the church, all ranks, all ages, &c.; none can do this by proxy or substitute.

2. In its prosecution we shall require much gracious assistance.

Especially knowledge; disposedness to fight and to endure hardness; deny ourselves, &c. Let us labor to feel our entire dependence upon God. Energy, vigilance, patience

3. A prayerful looking to Jesus, will enable us to stand fast and persevere.

It is a fight of faith, and not of sight. We must be found near to the Saviour, followers of the Saviour; "Looking to Jesus, the Author," &c.

APPLICATION.

1. Encourage the troops of Christ. From past conquests. Present, future prospects.

2. Alarm the ungodly, who are fighting gainst God

3. Exhort the inquiring to enrol under he blood-stained banner of the cross

SKETCH CCXXXIII.

THE WHOLE ARMOR

"Wherefore, take unto you the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand."—*Eph.* vi. 13.

THE present condition of the Christian is one of trial and peril. He is a mariner crossing the sea of life, exposed to storms and tempests, wherein many have made shipwreck of faith and a good conscience. He is a spiritual racer, and is running the Christian course, eagerly stretching forth his hand to seize the wreath of glory and eternal life. But the text refers to him as a warrior; he is exposed to numerous foes. "Wherefore," says the apostle, "take unto you the whole armor of God." Observe,

I. *The Day referred to.*

"The evil day."

II. *The Advice given.*

"Take unto you," &c.

III. *The Motive assigned*

"That ye may be able," &c.

I. *The day referred to.*

"The evil day." Doubtless it refers to the period of our life, the day of human probation. This is a very striking and correct view of the shortness and evanescence of our existence. Jacob's reply to Pharaoh was truly graphic and interesting, Gen. xlvii. 9. This is the account Moses gives us, Psalm xc. "The days of our years," &c. Job thus describes it; "Man, born of a woman," &c. Job xiv. 1. Yet, it is necessary we do not form too gloomy a view of human life. Life itself is a great blessing; we have many, very many enjoyments crowded in it; much to be truly grateful for. Our sorrows are infinitely lighter than our sins. Day a fit emblem, mixture of light and darkness, sunshine and storm, joy and sadness. Certain evils in his day to which we are all liable.

1. Evil day of affliction.

Our bodies have the seeds of innumerable diseases in them. Machine is in disorder. Few are exempted from this cup. "We that are in this tabernacle, groan, being burdened." How often wearisome days and nights are appointed unto us.

"Let others boast how strong they be,
Nor death, nor danger fear;
But we'll confess, O Lord, to thee,
What feeble things we are.

"Our life contains a thousand springs,
And dies if one be gone;
Strange that a harp of thousand strings
Should keep in tune so long."

2. Evil day of temptation

It seems to form a part of God's plan with respect to his people, that they should be tempted. "Blessed is the man who endureth," &c. Our great Head was tempted, and we must be conformed to him in his sufferings, that we may participate of his glory. Now, sometimes these temptations are exceedingly severe. "Simon, Simon, Satan hath desired thee," &c. The enemy is described as coming in like a flood, &c. "It needs be that we be in heaviness," &c.

3. Evil day of persecution.

That is a strong, sweeping remark of Paul's to Timothy: "Yea, and all that will live godly," &c., 2 Tim. iii. 12. There is eternal enmity between the seed of the woman, and the seed of the serpent. "Because ye are not of the world, the world hateth you," &c.

4. Evil day of death.

And this is sure to follow the rest. "We must needs die," &c. The apostle speaks of those who, through fear of death were all their lifetime subject unto bondage. This is an evil which nature dreads. The taking down of the earthly house of our tabernacle; the failing of our flesh and heart; the passing through the swellings of Jordan. Now, observe,

II. *The Advice given by the apostle.*

"Take unto you," &c. Notice,

1. We have recommended to us divine armor.

"Armor of God." This armor is particularly and fully specified, see ver. 14 Without armor we are incapable of resistance; we are not sufficient to select weapons for ourselves. This is never left to the soldier's choice. We must not use carnal weapons. "The weapons," &c. The Lord's warfare must be carried on by the Lord's weapons. God has selected and appointed every piece, and has specified its place.

2. We must have the whole armor of God.

That is, we must be armed throughout. Every part is vulnerable, and every part, therefore, must be defended. Examine the armory, which piece can be dispensed with? Not the girdle, not the breastplate, not the helmet, not the shoes, not the sword, not the shield. We have not one unnecessary piece, &c.

3. The whole armor must be taken unto us.

It must be adopted; it must be put on; it must be employed; it must be kept in use; it must not be put off until we lay down the tabernacle itself.

III. *The Motives urged.*

"That ye may be able," &c.

1. That we may not be destroyed by the evils of this life.

"Withstand." That the waves of affliction may not carry us away; that the floods of temptation may not overwhelm us; that the showers of fiery darts, however fierce and numerous, may not destroy us. That persecution may not move us from the hope of the gospel and the profession of Christ. And that when the surges of death wash round us, and beat over us, that death may be gain, and we may triumph over it, in the power of Christ's resurrection.

2. That we appear victorious in the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ.

"Having done all, stand." Great comprehensiveness in the words, "Done all." You have done something, ye young converts; you young men in Christ, have done more; you fathers, more still. Of your past trials and troubles, you shall know them no more. But all is not done. Much land to be possessed. Hold fast and persevere until you have done all, then you will stand, as,

(1) Amazing monuments of the preserving grace of God; kept by the power of God, &c.

(2) As more than conquerors through Jesus Christ. The warfare ended, the conflict gained, the victory achieved.

(3) As candidates for the rewards of a glorious immortality; the unfading crown; the overcomer's felicity, "To sit down," &c., to lay aside the armor, and enjoy the rest and the glory forever and ever.

APPLICATION.

1 Let believers rightly remember their present state. This is your evil day, expect and prepare for trouble.

2. Examine your armor; is it Divine armor? whole, and entire?

3. Let grace sustain you, depend entirely on it

4. Let glory animate you Think of the day when, having done all, you will stand.

SKETCH CCXXXIV.

THE GIRDLE.

"Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth."—*Ephes.* vi. 14

The Apostle in this paragraph calls our attention to the various parts of the Christian armor, as specified in the paragraph connected with the text. The first of these must engage our attention on the present occasion, "The girdle of truth." Some of the ancient girdles were broad, in which plates of silver or brass were put for defence. The girdle seems to have been intended for three purposes:

(1) To bind the garments, which were of a loose and flowing description, and which would have been a great hinderance to the warrior.

(2) To give support to the loins, amidst the fatigues of the war, and thus they were used by pilgrims, or persons placed in situations of toil. Hence Elisha ordered Gehazi his servant to gird up his loins, and go to the house of the Shunammite. John, the herald of Christ, wore a leathern girdle, &c.

(3) To defend the heart, &c. The military girdle was especially designed for this. Now, the Christian graces and virtues must not be loose and flowing, but concentrated, and bound together by the girdle of truth. The Christian will be in danger of fainting by fatigue; to prevent this, his loins must be girt by truth. He is liable to the dangerous weapons of the enemy, and he must have his military plated girdle, by which he may be effectually preserved from harm. "Stand therefore," &c.

I. *The Nature and Importance of the Girdle recommended.*

II. *The Means necessary to be employed in carrying the Recommendation into Effect*

I. *The Nature and Importance of the Girdle.*

Now observe, it is "Truth;" which is recommended.

1. There must be doctrinal truth in the understanding and judgment, in opposition to error.

Inseparable connection between faith and practice. The first sin was introduced by believing one of the lies of the devil. The Jews became an apostate nation, by mingling their own errors with the doctrines of God, until they rendered the commandments of God of none effect. The Galatians subverted the essential principles of the Gospel among them, by believing the errors of Judaizing teachers, &c. In all doctrines, in all ordinances, and in all the principles of Christianity, let us be anxious to have our loins girded about by truth.

2. There is the experimental truth of the Gospel, in opposition to mere formality in religion.

A man may read the books of a traveller, and give a cold assent to the descriptions it contains, but one who goes through the country itself, and sees it for himself, knows indeed and of a truth. Now it is not enough to know religion as taught in the Bible, preached in the house of God; it is not enough to admit it on the ground of the testimonies of others, but we must know and feel it for ourselves. Thus the Samaritan did, &c. Now, by personal realization of the blessings of the Gospel, we must have our loins girded with truth; then we shall know "that it is a faithful saying," &c.; we shall be able to say, "Christ loved us, and gave himself," &c.

3. There is the truth of profession in opposition to temporizing neutrality.

There cannot really be neutrality in religion, but we may assume a position which may appear to be so. Every Christian has heard and felt the truth. "Ye shall know the truth," &c. Sanctified by the truth; as such, Christ expects that they should be witnesses and confessors of the truth. Such was the man who was born blind; he boldly and fearlessly professed the truth. His parents did not. When Jesus entered Jerusalem, whole multitudes of his disciples blessed God, and said, "Blessed be the King," &c. Luke xix. 40. Now believers are to stand as Christ's professing disciples, bearing witness of and to the truth. So did the apostles Acts v. 27. See their reply ver. 32, and their feelings, ver. 41.

4. There is the truth of sincerity, in opposition to guile and dissimulation.

(1) Now it is of the utmost importance that truth should distinguish our conversation, "Speaking the truth in love." David prayed, "Deliver my soul, O Lord, from lying lips." Psalm cxx. It is said, "Lying lips are an abomination to the Lord." See Eph. iv. 25. In business, in the domestic circle, in all things let us cultivate the spirit of truth in our conversation.

(2) Now the truth of sincerity should also distinguish all our religious actions. There is sincere prayer, and hypocrisy; sincere confession of sin, and that which is false. So of liberality, of zeal, &c. Now God demands sincerity; he expects the loins to be girded with truth. Now the Apostle says, "Grace be with them that love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity." We are to stand, having our loins girt about with truth. Now,

II. *Let us consider the Means necessary to be employed in carrying out the Recommendation of the Text.*

If we would have our loins girt, &c.

1. Let us take care to be enriched with the truths of God's holy word.

David said, "Thy word have I hid in my heart," &c. Now this is the soul's preservation, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly," &c. When errors are abroad; when the soul is likely to sink into formality; when it is our temporal interest to temporize, how shall a man cleanse his way? only by taking heed to God's word. Hence we are exhorted to pay the more earnest heed, &c.

2. Let us keep prominently before us the divine model of truth.

Christ has left us an example, &c. How did he speak, and act, and profess, &c.? He was holy, harmless, &c. He did no sin, nor was guile found in his lips. We must hear him, behold him, imbibe his spirit, &c.

3. We must pray for the constant aid of the Spirit of truth.

Christ promised the Spirit of truth, which should lead his disciples into all truth. He will purify the heart; burn the dross and tin; expel the leaven of hypocrisy, &c.; make the flame on the altar of our hear pure. Now do not forget, that the possession of the Holy Spirit is really essential

truly indispensable; he will guide truly, influence truly, support truly, &c.

APPLICATION.

Now let me enforce the subject by reminding you, that attention to the text is,

1. Essential to your safety. We must be of the truth, and the truth must be in us, or we cannot be saved. It is,

2. Connected with our comfort. Truth and sincerity are essential to a good conscience, and to genuine peace. We cannot have the comforts of the Spirit of God without this.

3. Exhort sinners to believe the truth and be saved. This is the truth, that you are guilty, condemned, &c.; that Christ has died, &c.; that you may be justified freely, &c.

SKETCH CCXXXV

THE BREASTPLATE.

"And having on the breastplate of righteousness."—*Eph.* vi. 14.

We previously referred to the girdle, which the Christian Soldier is to wear, viz. the Girdle of truth; doctrinal truth; experimental truth; a profession of the truth, and practical truth. Our subject this morning is quite of a kindred character. Righteousness and truth must rise or fall together. Truth is a part of righteousness, they are both indispensable. One must encircle the Christian, the other must be the breastplate to protect the heart, &c. Observe, then,

I. *The Nature of the Christian Warrior's Breastplate*, "Righteousness."

II. *The Protection it affords.*

III. *How it is obtained.*

I. *The Nature of the Christian Warrior's Breastplate* "Righteousness."

To be righteous is to be conformed to the divine law; and as the law is holy, just, and good, so righteousness is purity, justice, and goodness. Now that righteousness which is vital and saving, may be considered in three respects; there must be,

1. Relative righteousness.

That is to stand justified before the law of God. Now the very opposite of this is the condition of the whole world before God; "All have sinned," &c., "there is none righteous," &c., all the world is guilty before God. How then can it ever be, that sinful man can be just before God? The Gospel reveals the plan; the law had certain claims upon man; man violated those claims; hence he incurred the penalty of death. But God provided a surety a substitute; he met all the claims of the law. He bore the curse on behalf of the transgressors. They who believe in Jesus are united to him, and are allowed to plead his work and death; they are thus accounted and dealt with as righteous for Christ's sake. Now this is called justification and it is said, "through this man," &c. There must be,

2. Righteousness of principle.

Now, if a man did not obtain a principle of righteousness, he would require justification every moment. For a relative righteousness obtained by faith in Christ, would not keep him from immediately falling into sin, and thus into condemnation. Now, the principle of righteousness was lost in the fall; and depravity has been the result to the whole family of man. Man has no power to renovate his own heart. This God effects for us in regeneration. Then, the stony heart is taken away, and a heart of flesh imparted. The soul is renewed. All old things are taken away, &c. We become partakers of the divine nature. Now, this is the new man, the second creation, &c. Without this, we cannot have the principle of righteousness within us. Then, there must be,

3. The fruits of righteousness.

Now, these are the necessary consequences of the heart being made right. The fountain being good, the streams will be so. The tree being made good, the fruit will be so. Now, this righteousness respects both God and man.

(1) There must be the yielding supreme homage, veneration, love, and obedience to God. Go to the law; "Thou shalt love the Lord," &c. Him only shalt thou worship and serve. This will be evidenced by the thoughts of the heart, venerating, and esteeming God. By the lips being hallowed towards God. By the life serving God.

(2) There must be obedience to the law of equity, as it respects our fellow-men. This, the law enforces. "Do ye unto others," &c. "Thou shalt love thy neighbor," &c. Now, this law of equity will

guide us in all our civil intercourse with mankind. And the law of love will induce us to do our fellow-creatures all the good in our power. Now, this righteousness is effected by the sanctifying influence of the Holy Spirit. He forms the soul anew, and he carries on the holy work to its blissful consummation. Such then is the righteousness which is to be the breastplate of the Christian soldier. Observe,

II. *The Protection it affords.*

Now, this righteousness is of essential and vital importance.

1. When exposed to the accusations of Satan.

Satan is represented in the Scriptures as accusing the saints before God. Thus, he did to Job. Thus also respecting Joshua, one of the high-priests of the Jews. See Zech. iii. 1. See also, Rev. xii. 10. Besides, he also accuses the soul, and endeavors to sink it into the gloom of despondency. Now, this shields the soul, repels attacks, and exhibits the saint in a righteous and acceptable state before God. This breastplate,

2. Yields peace to the mind, by removing the condemnations of conscience.

The unjustified sinner is condemned already. He has no peace, &c. But he who has fled to Christ, and is justified by faith, has peace—the internal peace of God which passeth all understanding.

3. This will preserve in the fiery trial of the last day.

Every man and his work will be tried as with fire. That fire will consume all imperfect righteousness, all self-righteousness and all unrighteousness. Nothing will stand but the breastplate, in which there is found the threefold righteousness we have placed before you. Notice,

III. *How this Breastplate of Righteousness is to be obtained.*

Now, this is to be obtained by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. By faith we are justified. By faith we become the children of God. John i. 12. By faith we are sanctified, by "the belief of the truth." Now, this must be a living operative faith, which relies on the efficacy of Christ's blood; and obtains the influence of the Holy Spirit

APPLICATION.

1. See the connection existing between the various parts of evangelical righteousness. We are justified through Christ's perfect righteousness. This is connected with a new nature, which is matured by sanctifying grace.

2. See the fallacy of self-righteousness. How awfully defective; how mad to trust in it.

3. How gracious God's method of salvation.

SKETCH CCXXXVI.

THE SHIELD

"Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked."—*Ephes.* vi. 16.

THE Christian warrior is to be distinguished for his pacific spirit. While he wars against sin and Satan, he is to be eminently a subject of Christ's peaceful kingdom. His path is the way of peace—his badge is to be peace—his motto peace—his spirit and his temper are to be influenced by peace—his song, "Glory to God in the highest," &c. Having the gospel of peace beneath his feet, he will enjoy and retain peace with God, and peace of conscience through the Lord Jesus Christ. This peace will cheer and strengthen him on his course; and thus, as Israel of old, his shoes shall be as iron and brass; and "as his day is, so shall his strength be." But we must consider the Christian's shield. Above all, or as some render, with all, or at all times, "taking the shield of faith," &c. Observe,

I. *The Danger specified.*

This is included in the "fiery darts of the devil." Here, we have,

1. The author of this danger.

"The wicked." He is pre-eminently the wicked one. The wicked one, as God is the good and holy one. The originator of wickedness in heaven. The successful projector of wickedness upon earth The father of wickedness, and of the wicked. As such, he is malevolently disposed towards man, especially towards the godly. "He goeth about," &c. He is man's incessant adversary. The hater of all good—the wrathful destroyer of immortal souls Notice,

2. The means he employs.

He is represented as an archer, who directs his fiery or envenomed darts, or as

rows, at the children of God. Now, this strikingly illustrates the temptations of the devil. They come often upon the Christian,

(1) As suddenly as darts and arrows. How often in a moment is some evil suggested to the mind—some wicked thought thrown across the mind.

(2) As silent, and invisible as darts. Other weapons make a noise; but the dart is directed to its object without alarm, often when alone, all external things quiet; yet, we feel the presence of these dangerous missiles.

(3) Dangerous as darts. Fiery darts are often sent into the enemy's camp, or city, to set it on fire. Poisoned darts, or arrows, often produce immediate pain, swelling, mortification, and death. Now, Satan's temptations and darts, poisoned with the evil of sin, which, if effectual, produce disease, and spiritual death. To add to the Christian's dangers, Satan's temptations,

(4) Are numerous and various as darts. He has darts to suit all persons, all conditions, and all times. And he suits his wiles and stratagems to the circumstances of those he attacks. And in this world we never can evade this danger. In heaven only, shall we be beyond the reach of his temptations. Notice,

II. *The Piece of defensive Armor recommended.*

"The shield of faith." Ancient shields were made of various materials, and of different sizes and forms. They were designed for the defence of the whole person, and to be moved in any direction from which danger might be apprehended. Now, in the Scriptures, we read of three shields for the godly man.

(1) The Lord God, &c. "I am thy shield," &c.

(2) The truth, or the divine word. "His truth shall be thy shield, and thy buckler." Ps. v. 12.

(3) Then, in the text, faith is said to be the Christian's shield. Now, there is no contradiction in these representations. Faith must have a revelation as its basis, and that is God's word. This word makes known God as the defence and helper of his people. Faith then is the instrumental shield of the Christian warrior. Now, faith is a shield,

1. To the Christian's spiritual life

"We live by faith in the Son of God. "The just," &c. It keeps the soul united to Christ. It inspires the breath of life The loss of faith, is the loss of the life of God in the soul.

2. It is a shield to all the graces of the soul.

As our faith is, so will our hope, and love, and humility, and courage, be. The graces cannot exist only as they are defended and supported by faith.

3. It is the Christian's shield in suffering and death.

Faith endures, as seeing him who is invisible. See how it influenced the Old Testament worthies, as recorded, Heb. xi. 33. Notice,

III. *The Efficiency of this Shield is asserted.*

"Wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery," &c. By faith, all Satan's temptations are successfully resisted and overcome.

1. Faith in the divine veracity and faithfulness, is successful against all temptations, to distrust, &c.

God cannot lie. He cannot change. He is ever faithful, &c. "The Father of lights," &c. "I am the Lord," &c.

2. Faith in the divine promises is successful against temptations to despondency.

In troubles; in adversity; in affliction &c. He will suggest that God has forgotten us; or will leave us, &c. But faith rests on the promises. "I will never, never leave," &c. "When thou passest through the waters," &c. "The Lord God is a sun," &c.

3. Faith in the divine justice and holiness, is successful against all temptations to presumption.

The believer will not sin that grace may abound. He never forgets the holiness and justice of God; and fears to offend against his righteous laws. A believer's view of the purity of God abases him into the depths of humiliation.

4. Faith in the divine Mediator is successful against all the insinuations and charges of the wicked one.

He is the accuser of the brethren, both to God and their own consciences. He wishes to darken the mind. To fill with slavish fear. To overwhelm with despair. Hence, he will refer the soul to its sins Infirmities, weaknesses, &c. Faith points to the Saviour, and triumphs in this, that

Christ has died, "yea, rather that he has risen," &c. His name, our plea; his righteousness, our robe; his Spirit, our sanctification; his grace, our support, &c.; his presence, our peace, and eternal rest.

APPLICATION.

1. Learn the incalculable worth of faith. It is the eye of the soul; the foot of the soul; the hand of the soul; the breath of the soul; the life of the soul.

2. Learn how faith may be strong and victorious. It must feed upon the word, and be in constant exercise. Unbelief shuts up the soul in the kingdom of Satan, and exposes to eternal wrath.

SKETCH CCXXXVII.

THE HELMET.

"And for an helmet, the hope of salvation."—1 *Thess.* v. 8. See also *Eph.* vi. 17.

We have now to call your attention to a very interesting and important part of the Christian's armor, and that is the helmet, which is to defend the head. I need not attempt to show you, that no part of the Christian can be more exposed than the head, and as such, that defence here is essentially requisite. It is said of Goliath, that he had an helmet of brass upon his head. Of the Bozrah conqueror, the illustrious Captain of our salvation, Isaiah gives us a striking description. See Isaiah lix. 17. Now, as truth is to gird the loins, righteousness to defend the breast, and faith to be the shield, so the helmet is to be our hope of salvation.

I. *Let us describe the Warrior's Helmet.*

II. *The Advantages he derives from it.*

I. *Let us describe the Warrior's Helmet.*

"Hope of salvation."

Now hope is the expectation of some future good. It is something essentially connected with faith, and yet it differs from that grace. Faith has more to do with the certainty and truth of things, hope with their excellency and desirableness. Hope is sometimes superior to desires and longings, although these generally accompany it. Observe, hope looks for and finally expects future good. Consider then,

1. The object of hope. "Salvation." Salvation implies enemies and peril and deliverance from both. The Christian has enemies. The world; his own heart; and the devil. He is in peril from these. They endanger his spiritual and eternal safety. Besides there is the enemy, the last enemy, death, and that of which it is to the lost, the dreadful precursor; the wrath of God; the second and eternal death. Now the Christian hopes, that is, confidently expects to be saved from all these enemies, and to be delivered from the wrath to come. Not only so, but he expects to enjoy the blessings of positive salvation, even immortality and eternal life. His hope embraces salvation here, and salvation forever.

2. The origin and source of this hope.

Now this hope is a grace of the Spirit, and is the effect of a renewed heart. See this clearly placed before us, 1 Pet. i. 3 Now God is the author of this hope. 2 Thess. ii. 16; Rom. xv. 13.

3. The basis and ground of hope.

Hope as an anchor of the soul, must have ground by which it holds the soul in blessed security. As a building it must have a strong foundation. Now this basi is threefold.

(1) The promises of the Father. Hence we read thus, "In hope of eternal life, which God promised." Titus i. 2. Now the ground of hope is God's revealed engagements, to save us from all our enemies and give eternal life. Now, these promises are many, precious, and immutable.

(2) The work of the Son. As the Father hath promised, so the Son hath obtained for us the blessing for which we hope. He hath lived for us, fought for us, suffered for us, and obtained eternal redemption for us. Now in receiving Christ by faith, he dwells within us, the hope of eternal glory.

(3) The influences of the Spirit. Now the Spirit is the divine agent that illumines the mind with hope, which lights it up in the breast. Dwells in us as the earnest, or pledge of the full inheritance. Rom viii. 16. The Spirit testifies that we are Christ's. Engages to lead, support, and bring us to the enjoyment of everlasting life. Such then is the Christian's helmet "the hope of salvation." Observe,

II. *The Advantages he derives from it.*

1. It animates for the warfare

See this illustrated in the case of Ca

eb and Joshua. 'Let us go up," &c. See Psalm xxvii. 1; iii. 3. See also Paul's triumphant conclusion, Rom. viii. 31.

2. It supports in sufferings.

Now in times of suffering we are in danger of adopting ungodly methods of deliverance, or of sinking under them. Now Jeremiah says, "It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord." Lam. iii. 26. "He that believeth shall not make haste." That is, he shall patiently hope. Paul speaks of the patience of hope And hope also supports us in trouble. Psalm xliii. 5 "Our light afflictions," &c. "While we look," &c. 2 Thess. ii. 16.

3. It will put us in possession of the victory and reward.

No real evil can befall the child of God. He shall end his days in hope. "The righteous hath hope." Like Simeon, "Now, Lord, lettest thou," &c. Or like Paul, "I have fought a good fight," &c. The Christian is now grappling with the last enemy, and as he struggles with him exclaims, "O death! where is thy sting?"

APPLICATION

. Cultivate and preserve this hope of salvation. Be familiar with the promises. Rest always on Christ. Cherish the influences of the Holy Spirit. Hope alway to the end.

2. As your hope is, so will be your comfort and joy.

3. Address those who have not a good hope.

SKETCH CCXXXVIII.

THE SWORD.

"And the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God."—*Eph.* vi. 17.

We now come to the consideration of the last part of the Christian armor, "the sword of the Spirit." You will observe that all the other pieces of armor are purely of a defensive character. The breastplate to defend the heart, the helmet the head, and the shield to quench the fiery darts of the devil. The sword is designed o answer both purposes; it is to guard the Christian soldier, and by it he is to vanquish all his enemies. The blessed word is held out to us as being adapted to e ery state and circumstance in which we can be placed. It is that hammer which breaks the rocky heart in pieces; it is that fire which consumes the stubble of our sins; it is that light which is to guide our feet into the way of peace; it is that lamp which is to direct our steps in the night of perplexity; it is that cordial which is to console and cheer in sorrow; those riches which are to form the Christian's treasure both in time and in eternity. But at present we are to keep the martial view of it before our eyes. "Take the sword of the Spirit," &c. Notice,

I. *The Sword recommended.*

II. *When it may be employed.*

III. *Some Directions for effectually wielding it.*

I. *The Sword recommended.* Observe,

1. The sword itself.

Is "the word of God." Now when the Apostle wrote, he must have referred to the Old Testament scriptures only: of these great and blessed things are spoken. Writing to Timothy, he says, "From a child," &c. Jesus said, "Search the scriptures," &c. Now we have the whole book; not only the twilight of the Old Testament, but the meridian noon of the gospel of Chris.. We have both the shadow and the substance; the type and the antitype; the mystery and the revelation. As Christians we have especially to do with the writings of the New Testament. This is the portion of the disciples of Jesus. Here our duties are specified, our privileges exhibited, our blessings announced. Notice,

2. The description given of this sword "Sword of the Spirit."

(1) It is the production of the Spirit. Not the word of man, but the word of God. "All scripture is given by inspiration of God." 2 Tim. iii. 16. See also 2 Peter i. 19–21.

(2) It is the instrument which the Holy Spirit makes use of in effecting his purposes. Now view this as personally applying to believers. It is by the word the Spirit alarms and convinces of sin; it is by the word the Spirit converts and regenerates. "Ye shall know the truth," &c. "Born again of the incorruptible seed," &c. It is by the word the Spirit sanctifies and builds up. Acts xx. 32. So also in extending the kingdom of the

Lord Jesus, the Spirit effects it by the word of God. Gospel heralds are to go forth crying, "Unto you is the word of this salvation sent." It is this gospel of the kingdom which is to be preached, &c. The world is in darkness and error. Hence the prayer, "O Lord, send out thy light and truth!"

(3) It is by the Spirit's influence believers can profitably use the word of God. Hence that prayer, "O Lord, open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things," &c. Clearness of spiritual vision must be given to us by the Holy Spirit. See John xvi. 13, &c. Notice,

II. *When the Sword of the Spirit may be employed.*

Whenever we are assaulted by the devil; whenever the world attacks us; whenever our hearts would deceive us.

1. Satan's assaults are to be resisted by the sword of the Spirit.

See this exemplified in the case of the Captain of our salvation, Matt. iv. 4, &c.

2. The world's attacks are to be overcome by the sword of the Spirit.

Christ has said, "in the world ye shall," &c. "Be of good cheer, he that is in you is greater," &c. Now faith in God's all-sufficiency will overcome the world 'This is the victory by which," &c. When in danger of worldly-mindedness, "Take the sword," &c. "Ye are not of the world, even as I am not," &c. "Come out," &c. When in danger of the snares of worldly riches. "Lay not up for yourselves," &c. The word points to Abraham, and Moses, &c. "They sought a better country," &c.

3. When our hearts would deceive us.

By distrust and despondency. It is written, "As thy day is," &c. The Lord will allow of no trouble, or trial, or temptation, but what is common. "Let us go up," &c. When in danger of being deceived into self-complacency and self-satisfaction. "I count not to have apprehended that for which I was," &c. "I press toward the mark," &c. Or into supineness and indolence. "Let us give all diligence," &c. "Work out your salvation," &c. "Let us fear lest a promise," &c. "Be steadfast," &c. Notice,

III. *Some Directions for effectually wielding it*

1. Cultivate an intimate acquaintance with it.

Read—lay it up—meditate. Let it dwell in you richly. Be mighty in the scriptures.

2. Keep this sword polished and bright.

This is only to be done by constant exercise. Practise the word of God; every day will give you opportunities.

3. Seek, by constant prayer, a renewal of spiritual strength.

God will make the hands of your arms strong. "Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might." "By waiting on the Lord ye shall renew," &c.

APPLICATION.

1. Learn from this not to wage war with unhallowed weapons; such as human reason—such as human passion. Neither, nor yet both, will do.

2. The weapon provided is all-sufficient. With this we may go forth, like our illustrious Captain, from conquering to conquer. It is divine, and has omnific power.

3. Use it for all spiritual purposes.

SKETCH CCXXXIX.

MAN'S IGNORANCE OF THE FUTURE.

"So soon as I shall see how it will go with me."—*Phil.* ii. 23.

PAUL a prisoner at Rome, &c. His anxiety for the cause of Jesus; his interest in the Philippians, and his joy in Timothy's presence; his resolution to send him. "So soon," &c. Notice,

I. *That we are entirely ignorant of the Future.*

We know not how it will go with us,

1. As to our temporal concerns.
2. As to our families and friends.
3. As to our health.
4. As to our sufferings or joys.
5. As to our lives.

How, when, and under what circumstances we shall die. Now consider,

II. *Some of the Reasons why we are kept thus ignorant as to the Future.*

1. It is his own divine prerogative to know and foresee all things.

It is highly probable that angels are equally ignorant of the future.

2. A knowledge of future sufferings would disqualify us for present enjoyments.

Christ was overwhelmed with this: he saw the cup in prospect. We should enjoy

nothing, do nothing, &c. Our happiness is therefore connected with it.

3. We are called to live by faith, not by sight.

Faith is the essence of religion; it hangs upon God, trusts in him; and this is to be entire, and constant, and till death.

III. *The Improvement we should make of this Ignorance of the Future.*

1. It should prevent rash arrangements.

Paul could not determine as to sending Timothy, &c. "Boast not thyself," &c. "Brethren, the time is short."

2. It should teach us moderation in all things.

If so, shall we be immoderately attached to present joys, &c., or overwhelmed with sorrows, &c.?

3. It should promote confidence in God.

We are to commit all our concerns into God's hands by prayer. "Be careful for nothing," &c. "Cast all your care," &c. "Commit thy way," &c. "His eyes," &c. He sees all, and knows all, and has engaged to keep, &c.

4. To lead us to be anxious about the future glories of heaven.

These are real, invaluable, and eternal.

APPLICATION.

1. Avoid presumption.
2. Be humble.
3. Rely, and trust in God.

SKETCH CCXL.

THE DAY OF PROSPERITY.

"In the day of prosperity be joyful," &c.—*Eccl.* vii. 14.

Among the varied excellences of true religion, none more striking than its adaptation and appropriateness to all the circumstances and conditions in life. Its instructions, admonitions, and consolations are suited to every possible variety of state in which we are called to pass in this valley of tears. Now, this is one proof of its divinity. It is a religion suited to every man, and to every man in every lot, and in every situation. Here, we meet with addresses to the young, the middle aged, and the old. To the master and the servant; the parent and the child; the rich and the poor; the happy and the afflicted. Now, the two latter classes are addressed in the text. Now, on the present occasion, we shall confine ourselves to those in prosperity. Let us,

I. *Define Prosperity.*

Several things are necessary to constitute prosperity.

1. There must be temporal competency.

As living creatures we have a variety of wants. Food, raiment, habitations. All these are indispensable to our comfort. Now, where this competency is possessed, an individual may be as happy as the monarch of a nation.

2. There must be bodily health.

Without this, the whole world cannot yield us enjoyment. The balm of life; the honey of human existence. What avail dignities, honors, and riches, friends &c.?

3. There must be the interchanges of friendship.

Man is a social creature. A great portion of our joy or sorrow depends upon the social circle wherein we move. Nothing of an earthly kind yields sweeter pleasure than the possession of friends. Those who are interested in our happiness. Solicitous for our welfare. Those who rejoice in our joys, and weep with our tears. Those who counsel us—who cheer us—who are always ready to aid us. "As iron," &c. How much more the voice—the soothing, encouraging voice of friendship! Alas! even relations, the nearest kindred, often cannot be numbered among our friends.

4. There must be the enjoyment of the favor and peace of God.

No condition in life can be truly or substantially happy without this. If man had the whole world for his portion, without this, he is not, he cannot be happy. No, there will be an aching void; mental restlessness; torturing anxiety, &c., &c. Happy are they whose God is the Lord. His favor is life; his loving-kindness better than life. More than these are not necessary to prosperity. Let us,

II. *Expose its Dangers.*

Every situation has its snares. Every condition its dangers. Every circumstance its temptations. Now, what are the peculiar dangers of prosperity?

1. We are in danger of forgetting God.

See Prov. xxx. 7. In danger of self dependence When all is light and pros

perous, do not see so much need of God. So long as the lake of Galilee was calm, he disciples disturbed not the sleeping Redeemer.

2. We are in danger of pride.

We too often judge of ourselves by what we have, rather than by what we are. What a striking instance in Nebuchadnezzar! Dan. iv. 30.

3. We are in danger of deception.

When in prosperity, men are generally surrounded by flatterers. Servants flatter; friends flatter; our own hearts flatter. Then, how easy it is to be deceived! Without great discrimination, and much prayer, it will be almost impossible to avoid deception.

4. We are in danger of worldly conformity.

Worldly society, worldly maxims, worldly dress, &c. It will be difficult to avoid the eddying stream. Demas was rich; and it is said of him by an apostle, "He hath forsaken me, having loved the present world." We are,

5. In danger of earthly-mindedness.

If riches increase, set not your hearts upon them. But have you ever felt how difficult this is? When poorer, you were liberal and generous. But did this feeling grow and increase with your prosperity? How few can say this! The love of money is the root of all evil. War has slain its millions. Plague, fevers, and pestilence, their myriads. But avarice vastly more than all these together. Let us,

III. *Exhibit its Privileges.*

"In the day of prosperity be joyful." The first idea is, that,

1. Of enjoyment.

Be joyful or happy. God desires his creatures to be happy. For this, his bounty is abundant—yea, overflowing. God does not love self-inflicted tortures, Eccl. iii. 11, 12, 13. The father delights to see his children enjoy those comforts he is able to give them. A man his friends, &c. Godliness, with contentment, is great gain. Then our joy,

2. Should be that of gratitude.

Every creature of God is good; and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving. 1 Tim. iv. 4. "Giving thanks always, for all things to God." Eph. v. 20. By this, we shall be prevented from exalting ourselves. By this, every blessing will be doubly blest. By this, God will be well pleased. "In every thing give thanks," &c.

3. It must be the joy of benevolence.

Have we been blessed with prosperity? then the inquiry is, "What shall I render unto the Lord," &c.? Now, God says "Thou shalt remember the poor," &c. See 1 Tim. vi. 17. Then there is Christ's cause at home and abroad. Now, this is the essence of enjoyment. God does not possess greater felicity than that of doing good. Oh, see that appeal Job was enabled to make, xxix. 11.

4. Let it be the joy of moderation.

Brethren, the time is short, let those that rejoice, be as those that rejoice not. All distinctions will soon terminate. No distinctions in the grave. Soon our riches, our books, our houses, will be possessed by others. Let all things be held with a slack hand. Let us not depend upon earthly good—all is fleeting and evanescent. "The fashion of this world," &c. "This is not our rest," &c. "Desire a better country," &c.

APPLICATION.

Let me address three descriptions of character:

1. Those who possess spiritual prosperity, and not temporal. Sanctified poverty is infinitely better than unhallowed prosperity.

2. Those who possess temporal without spiritual prosperity. "What will you do," &c.

3. Those who possess neither, how utterly wretched.

SKETCH CCLI.

THE DAY OF ADVERSITY.

"In the day of adversity consider."—*Eccles* vii. 14.

'MAN that is born of a woman, is of few days," &c. This world has fitly been compared to a wilderness, or valley of tears. "Man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upwards." It matters not who were our ancestors; what the splendors attending our birth; what our earthly prospects: we are heirs of sorrow, &c., are hourly exposed to a thousand sources of misery. And what is the best course to be

adopted amid the distresses of life? Shall we endeavor to fly to the giddy scenes of worldly dissipation? Shall we sink into sullen apathy; and by stoical stupidity try to blunt our feelings, and create as great an amount of insensibility as possible? Alas! what miserable refuges are these! The only balm which can sooth in distress, is the consolation of true religion. And by that we are admonished in the text, "In the day of adversity to consider." Let us then ascertain,

I. *What is to be understood by the Day of Adversity.*

1. When we are deprived of the temporal good things of this life.

In our residence in this world we shall require temporal blessings; yet some of the best of men have been placed in extreme poverty and want. See the case of Hagar, with her infant child, Gen. xxi. 14, &c. Elijah, also, was saved from starvation by miracle, 1 Kings xix. 4. Then, there is the affecting case of Lazarus, compelled to wait at the rich man's gate, &c. The blessed Jesus, too, was extremely poor. No home, no earthly goods. Cradle and grave, both borrowed. Thousands of God's saints have been in similar circumstances. "Day of adversity,"

2. May include seasons of domestic bereavements.

God has wisely arranged that families should not be removed at a stroke. How soon the first human pair were distressed by beholding their beloved Abel stretched out on the cold ground a silent corpse! All families know what bereavements mean. There is Abraham left to finish his pilgrimage without his beloved Sarah. David severed from his beloved Jonathan. Rachel weeping for her children. Sometimes these bereavements are peculiarly distressing: such was the case with the lovely Rachel, who in the same hour became a mother and a corpse. So, too, with David, who had to mourn over the death of his rebellious son. "O Absalom, my son,' &c. So Ezekiel, who was called to listen to the divine mandate, "Son of man, behold I take away the desire of thine eyes with a stroke." So the widow of Nain, who was following the funeral of her only son. These are days of adversity indeed. Then, there are,

3. Times of bodily afflictions.

When wearisome nights and days are appointed unto us; when we are confined to our apartments, or to our bed; when the body is racked with pain, scorched with fever, or wasted by pining disease; when food is bitter; when light is painful; conversation afflictive; when life has lost all its charms—yet, how often is this the case! How many thousands have felt all this, yea, more than this! Have not some of you felt it? Well, any of these we may conceive to be the day of adversity. Observe, then,

II. *The Course prescribed.*

"In the day of adversity consider." Now I remark,

1. That we are naturally averse to consideration.

Hence, how frequently is consideration enforced in the divine word. Moses exclaimed, "O that they were wise, that they would consider their latter end." God says, "Israel doth not know, my people will not consider." Hence, he says by his prophet Haggai, "Consider your ways."

2. In adversity we have many facilities to promote consideration.

The mind is made serious—sometimes broken down; driven out of the giddy scenes of the world. Chased, as it were, into privacy; shut out from external objects of attraction.

3. Afflictions have often produced consideration.

How many when rich and affluent were careless! God took them down from slippery places, and in their adversity they sought God early. How many have rejected all counsel, &c.: but when their advisers have been laid in the silent tomb, their advice and entreaties have been remembered and blest. Thousands have had to bless God that ever they were afflicted. But what should we especially consider in the day of adversity?

1. That all our sorrows are the resul of sin.

Sin introduced all the evils which surrounded us. Earth is desolated, body filled with diseases, rendered mortal; all the sorrows of the mind are its fruitful progeny. We do not trace suffering to its rise, unless we follow it up to the fountain of our sins.

2. Consider that all our sufferings are under the control of God.

Yes, every event is either his appointment, or has his all-wise permission, see

.sa. xlv. 7; see also, Job ii. 10, and xxxiv. 29. Afflictions are not the result of accident, arise not out of the dust, not the work of our enemies merely. God sees all, watches all, appoints all, or permits all. What a blessed thought that we are never excluded from the providential regards of God! A providence wise, just, and benevolent. Consider,

3. That our adversities are for the most salutary purposes.

Were we holy and perfect, then they might be dispensed with; but sickness requires medicine; the child requires correction; the gold requires refining; the air requires purifying winds; the earth requires nipping frosts and winter. So, our souls can only be disciplined for a better world, &c., by adversities. Consider,

4. That our adversities are mercifully mitigated.

Your afflictions are never unmixed; always some rays of light, some alleviations. Lost temporal mercies, but yet you have had health and friends; lost health, but the consolations of God have not been few or small; always favorable signs in your visitations. There never was but one unmixed cup, and Christ drank it in the garden. Our sorrows are infinitely lighter than our sins. It is of the Lord's mercies, &c. Consider,

5. That our seasons of adversity are of limited duration.

"Day" of adversity. Therefore, they who weep should be as though they wept not. While we mourn, the clouds begin to disperse; while we sigh, the darkness breaks, and we have the dawn of a brighter day. Look back, you remember when you were ready to despair, you thought the Lord had forgotten to be gracious, but at eventide it was light. The Lord called you to rejoice in the brightness of his countenance. Consider while you are in distress, that the waters of affliction are rolling into the world of forgetfulness. Go to yonder grave-yard, and rely upon it that among all the grades of character, old and young, rich and poor, &c. there is not an aching head, nor an anxious breast.

APPLICATION.

Let me remind you, that the three worlds revealed to us, are essentially different from each other.

1. This world is a state of mixture; joy and sorrow; health and pain; light and darkness.

2. Hell is the region of unmixed evil. There is all night, all darkness, all wo, all despair.

3. Heaven is a world of unmixed felicity. Day, health, life, joy. Consider the end of life, is to prepare for this world of blessedness.

SKETCH CCXLII.

ON HEARING.

PART I.

"Take heed what ye hear."—*Mark* iv. 24.

It is one of the greatest privileges we can have on earth, to hear the blessed tidings of the gospel of Christ. "Blessed are the people who hear the joyful sound," &c. Hence, Christ said, "Blessed are your eyes," &c., Matt. xiii. 16. 17. No doubt any of you would have felt greatly exalted, had you been relatives of Jesus. Mary, his mother, was indeed highly favored above women. So cried one in the days of his flesh. "A certain woman of the company lifted up her voice and said, Blessed is the womb, &c., and the breasts which," &c., Luke xi. 27, &c. Christ did not deny this, but he said, "Yea, rather blessed," &c. No doubt it was a great privilege to see and hear the Son of God in the days of his flesh, but it did not secure a greater blessing; for Christ said "Thomas, because thou hast seen, thou hast believed; blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed," John xx. 27. We have the word of God plentifully distributed among us; the joyful tidings are daily proclaimed in our ears. It is for us to improve our opportunities, and be made better by our mercies. The text refers to the subject matter of what we hear,

I. *In what Respect you are to take Heed as to the Matter which is delivered to you.*

1. Ascertain that what you hear is the truth.

God has given you a touchstone, the sacred volume. Prove what you hear: weigh it; bring every thing to the law and to the testimony, see Acts xvii. 11.

2. Take heed that you have the whole truth.

Ananias, &c., gave of their real property

but not the whole promised. Paul said, "I have not shunned to declare the whole counsel of God."

3. Take heed that you have nothing but the truth.

No mixture of error; no human clay with the divine gold. There must be no adding to, nor subtracting from, the Word of God.

II. *Why you should take heed what you hear.*

1. We should remember all men are fallible.

Good men may err; learned men may err; no man, however learned or pious, is to be our leader, except as he gives to us the unadulterated word of God. We are to call none Rabbi, &c. No sure rule but God's word. Numbers or respectability amount to nothing in religion. If numbers made a doctrine or sect right, then Popery is true, and Protestantism is false.

2. Nothing but the truth will benefit our souls.

The truth renews, sanctifies, builds up.

3. Error is productive of the most pernicious consequences.

It confuses, misleads, often involves in condemnation. Endangers the salvation of the soul.

4. Hearing is connected with the day of judgment and eternity.

We must all give an account.

APPLICATION.

1. Cultivate a discriminating state of mind.

2. Desire the sincere and unadulterated Word of God.

3. Be ever subject, both in heart and life, to Divine authority.

SKETCH CCXLIII.

ON HEARING

PART II.

"Take heed, therefore, how ye hear."—*Luke* viii. 18.

THIS text refers to the manner of hearing, "How ye hear."

I. *Hear with Reverence.*

Remember it is the Word of God; word from heaven; word of life; respecting the soul, death, salvation, eternity. With what feelings of awe we should listen to it.

II. *With sincere Attention.*

The opposite of listlessness, indifference, and lethargy. Both bodily and mental attention, Heb. ii. 1. "If any man hath ears," &c. Let him be all ear, all attention to what is said.

III. *With Ingenuousness and Candor.*

I do not suppose that you can be indifferent to the manner of the speaker. No doubt you will have your attachment both as to mode and composition, to style and delivery, &c. But candor will ever have chief respect to what is said, not to how it is said. Candor will not listen to find defects; will not reject a sermon for an awkward word or mispronunciation; or the action violent, or the voice disagreeable. I say, you cannot be indifferent to these things, but if you are ingenuous and candid, all these will be treated as things utterly unimportant. Take heed, and hear.

IV. *In the Exercise of Faith.*

It is this which will render the word preached, either "the savor of life unto life," &c., Heb. iv. 2. "Without faith it is impossible," &c. If I believe what the gospel reveals of my state, I shall be alarmed, anxious, &c. If I believe the love of God, as displayed in the gift of Christ, I am overcome, and exclaim, "I yield, I yield, I can hold out no more." If I believe in Christ's merits and power, I shall venture my all upon him, &c. Belief hails the word with gladness; unbelief rejects it, and keeps the soul in a state of exposedness to perdition "Go ye, and preach," &c.; "he that believeth," &c.

V. *In the Spirit of Self-application*, &c.

Not to take heed how others hear, nor yet hear for them. All religion is personal; the word of God is for our personal reception. We must come to the waters ourselves; eat the bread of life for ourselves; behold the Lamb of God for ourselves. We must hear,

VI. *With fervent Prayer for the Divine Blessing.*

God must prepare the heart, which is the soil; he too must fix it within the mind; he must water it, and by his heavenly rays, make it to vegetate, &c. If we prayed over it, we should not so soon forget it; it would not make so little impression, &c.

VII. *We must hear so as to retain the Word of God, and obey it.*

The good-ground bearers yielded fruit

—thirty, sixty, &c. The Word must be kept, so as to dwell in us richly in all wisdom. Let me refer you to two passages of holy writ, expressly on this subject, Matt. vii. 24; James i. 22, &c. If we hear rightly, our knowledge will be in proportion to it; and our practice in proportion to our knowledge. "If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do hem."

APPLICATION.

1. Take heed and embrace all opportunities of hearing. These at most are few, and they are rapidly passing away. We shall soon visit the sanctuary for the last time; soon hear and speak for the last time; oh, let us be wise, to improve our opportunities.

2. Let us invite all around us to come and hear the word of the Lord. Those who have tasted of the water of life, are to say, "Come, and go up with us to the house of the Lord."

3. Let us often examine the effects which hearing has produced upon us. Are we wiser, more humble, more delighted with the word? is Christ more precious, sin more loathsome, and heaven more desirable?

SKETCH CCXLIV.

LIGHT AND THE GOSPEL COMPARED

(A MISSIONARY SKETCH.)

"And God said, Let there be light: and there was light."—*Gen.* i. 3

OUR text has been considered the sublimest sentence the world possesses, in any language or tongue. It presents before us the power and grandeur of the Deity, in the most striking and magnificent view. He resolves to bring into being this globe of ours; he steps forth to throw into activity his creative energies. Before him is one dark void, one confused chaotic mass. The silence is broken by the omnific voice of God: he speaks, and says, "Let there be light," and behold there is light. Obedient to the Divine Mandate, that beautiful first-born creature bursts into existence, the fairest and brightest image of its great original. The adversaries of revelation have treated the text with scorn, as being at variance with philosophy and the true nature of things, as light is said to have existed before the sun and moon were created. It is, however, not difficult to show the unbelieving reviler of revelation, that the text is both philosophically and theologically true; caloric or latent heat, which is inseparably connected with latent or hidden light, exists in every part of nature, without which there could be no vegetation, and which may be considered as the life of the material world. This then was the light which God produced by his word. The subject of light considered philosophically, is one peculiarly interesting and instructive. On the present occasion, however, we wish to apply the subject to the spread of the light of truth; the light of the glorious Gospel of the blessed God. Let us consider,

I. *The Appropriateness of the Metaphor.*

How may the Gospel be described and compared to light? By a little attention to the Holy Oracles, we shall perceive that the Gospel is often thus represented. Matt. iv. 16. Isaiah lx. 1. "Arise, shine," &c. "Life and immortality," &c. Jesus speaking also said, "Light is come," &c. John iii. 19. See the full application of it, 2 Cor. iv. 4–6.

1. Light and the Gospel resemble each other in their source and Divine Resemblance.

God made the light; he produced it by his infinite skill and Almighty Power; and as he formed it, so he formed it in the bright resemblance of himself. "God is light," &c.; "He is the Father of lights," &c. How forcibly do these remarks apply to the Gospel; it is not a cunningly devised fable; it is not of man, or by man, but of God, and from God; "Glorious Gospel of the blessed God." Not only is the Gospel from God, but it bears the Divine likeness; it reflects the Divine image. Every attribute of God is seen in the Gospel. It is a Gospel of mercy, yet of justice; a Gospel of grace, yet of holiness; a Gospel of truth, and of wisdom, and power. "Here the whole Deity is known," &c.

2. Light and the Gospel resemble each other in their adaptation to the end designed.

The design of light is to make manifest. Objects truly interesting may surround us, we may have the power of vision, but without light they necessarily remain unseen

So it is with the great things connected with the soul, and God, and eternity. Now these are all made manifest, all made known, &c. Reason could not apprehend these things; philosophy could not. The Gospel has brought them all before us; all the mighty, momentous concerns of the soul and eternity, are made manifest. Now, no doubt, no obscurity, &c. Two remarks,

(1) The *simplicity* of *light*, while it is so glorious, yet so simple. No glare, &c.

(2) *Its mildness.* All other bodies, when put in rapid motion, are destructive in their effects. The *stream* rushes on when swelled by the flood, and sweeps away every thing before it; the *air*, although the balm of life, when agitated, levels buildings, tears up the trees of the forest, or sinks the majestic vessels in the waters of the deep. Not so light: although it moves with such rapidity, yet it falls on the eye with radiant softness and beauty. Now so the Gospel is full of holy simplicity; it is a revelation for the poor, and the illiterate, and the wayfaring men, &c. So it is like light for its *mildness;* it is a Gospel of grace, no error, no lightnings, no thunders, no earthquakes, no curses; all tenderness, all heavenly softness. "Law was given," &c. Contrast the two passages, "Cursed be he who continueth not," &c.; and "God so loved the world," &c.

3. Light and the Gospel resemble each other in their purity.

Darkness is the emblem of ignorance and crime, light of knowledge and holiness. How beautifully transparent is light, no foul mixture of pollution with it; it may pass over regions, where the plague or pestilence rage, but unlike the air, it exhales none of the contagious matter. So the Gospel is eminently a system of purity; it is holy in every sense of the word; all its doctrines, principles, and precepts, are holy; in it is no impurity at all. How unlike every form of Paganism and Mahomedanism; on it is engraven, "holiness to the Lord;" it has come in contact with every vile system, and yet it has retained all its original purity. Now the Gospel is not only pure, but it *diffuses* purity; it is God's great instrument for delivering the mind from sin; "Ye shall know the truth," &c.; "Sanctify them by thy truth," &c.

4 Light and the Gospel resemble each other in their inseparable connection with joy and happiness.

Solomon has said, Eccl. xi. 7, "Truly the light is sweet," &c. See that poor sightless creature, how deplorable is his condition; how many enjoyments he loses, &c.! See that benighted traveller, in the dreary desert, in danger from wild beasts &c. See the tempest-tossed mariner, how he longs for the light of the morning. Now the Gospel finds man naturally thus, he is blind, in the darkness of his lost estate, in the way of death. He is exposed to the tempest of the Divine wrath, under the curse of God. The Gospel totally reverses his condition; his understanding is filled with the light of knowledge; his conscience the light of peace; his heart the light of joy and hope in the Lord. Now he is a child of light and of the day; a child of grace, and heir of heaven. Let me then hasten to notice,

II. *The Will of God respecting it*

It is the will of God,

1. That man should have the light of salvation.

He wills not the moral darkness of one soul; God hates moral darkness. To expel it, and to illuminate the soul of man, he has sent his word, his Son, his Spirit, and his ministers, &c. It is the will of God,

2. That his Church should be the light of the world.

The world is in darkness; how is it to be lightened? by the instrumentality of the Church. Hence the Church is likened to the moon, cheering the night with her silvery beams; also compared to a candlestick, &c., ye are the lights of the world; "Arise, shine," &c. God does not expect the world to be savingly enlightened by literary or philosophical societies; by mechanic' institutions, by educational or temperance societies. These may be auxiliary means, these may be enlisted into the service of the Church, but God says to the Church, "Let there be light," diffuse your rays abroad, &c. It is the will of God,

3. That the world should be filled with the light of the gospel of Christ.

(1) Now the gospel is adapted to all the world. It is as much suited to one part of it as to another.

(2) It is expressly said that it is designed for the whole world. "God sent not his Son," &c. "I am the light of the

world.' "This we know and testify," &c. Go into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature," &c.

(3) The whole world shall finally enjoy its saving rays. "This gospel of the kingdom," &c. See Isa. xi. 9, lx. 19, and Hab. ii. 14.

APPLICATION.

1. Have you the light of Divine grace in your hearts? Can you say, "Once I was blind," &c. Ye who were once in darkness, are you now light in the Lord? How necessary this to comfort in life, peace in death, and safety in eternity!

2. Have you this light in your families? It is said of the children of Israel, that during the darkness of Egypt, they had light in their dwellings. Keep the fire on the altar of domestic worship, continually burning.

3. Have you light in your neighborhoods? Are your neighbors in the way to heaven or perdition? See that you feel for them, and try to enlighten them.

4. Are you assisting to enlighten the world? It is the will of God that the world should be filled with light. What is your heart's desire? Is it that "Israel," &c. "Send out thy light and truth." Is it, "God be merciful," &c. Are you acting as well as praying? Are you sending the word of light—the ambassadors of light, &c. Oh, how delightful will be the day of the world's millennial glory, when we shall not need to ask our brother, "Knowest thou the Lord," &c.!

SKETCH CCXLV

RIGHT RECEPTION OF THE SCRIPTURES.

"Ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God."—1 *Thess.* ii 13.

THE Christian must necessarily have a great deal to do with the Holy Scriptures. To be intimate with them is both a duty and privilege; to neglect them is highly criminal and injurious; yet, how few read them as they ought to do; how few give their soul's supreme affection to them. The text places the subject in an important light before us.

I. *The Subject spoken of.*

"The word of God."

II. *The Reception we should give it.*

I. *The Subject spoken of.*

"The word of God." Now I shall no attempt at this time to prove that the Scriptures are the word of God; with my present congregation unnecessary; you admit this truth, &c. Then allow me to remind you,

1. That this description applies to all Scripture, &c.

The historical books; scripture narratives, prophecies, &c. Every word of God is pure and precious, yet,

2. Some parts of the Scriptures are confessedly more important to us than others.

Generally the New Testament must be more so than the Old. Here we have the substance of the types and shadows; prophecies realized; promises fulfilled. Here we have the Messiah the great subject of revelation.

3. Next to the gift of Jesus and the Spirit, the word of revelation is the most invaluable gift of God to man.

Without it, we should know nothing fully of God, of ourselves, of eternity, of heaven, &c. Without it, we should be like the mariner, out at sea, without a compass or chart, "driven hither and thither," &c. Oh, how indescribably precious this book. Notice,

II. *The Reception we should give it.*

Now, it must be "received by us," into our understanding, judgment, affections memory, &c. But it is to be received as the "word of God," &c.

1. With supreme veneration.

Not as the word of a fellow worm, or creatures, however exalted. The word of Jehovah, whose word shakes the heavens and the earth. Angels are said to hearken to the voice of his word. We should bow before him, and say, "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth."

2. With implicit confidence.

We may doubt and hesitate when fallible erring man addresses us; not so when God speaks. He is truth, unchangeableness itself. Not to believe, is to suspect him of falsity, &c.

3. With grateful and humble affection.

Affection to the Giver; gratitude for the gift; humility of soul; not to carp or quarrel with it.

We must receive it for all spiritual purposes; for faith, practice, comfort, &c.

We must receive every word of it. All pure, precious, &c.

SKETCH CCXLVI.

ON WORKING IN GOD'S VINEYARD.

"Son, go, work to-day in my vineyard."—*Matt.* xxi. 28.

Among the various metaphors by which the church and kingdom of Christ are represented, none is more common or more beautifully expressive than that of a vineyard. Read over the following passage, Isaiah v. 1. Then see Matt. xxi. 33. Now, in the act of conversion, the believer is transplanted out of the desert of the world, into the vineyard of the church. He is cut off from the wild olive, and engrafted into Christ, the true and living vine. In this change, God contemplates the salvation of the individual; but besides this, he also contemplates the improvement of his church, and the diffusion of his truth. While he invites souls to come to him to be saved, he also invites them to dedicate their entire selves to his glory, that "whether they eat or drink, or whatever they do," &c. He says to all of them, "Go, work to-day in my vineyard." Practical Christianity is working for God. Let me, then, endeavor to illustrate this proposition. We notice,

I. *That all Believers are called to work for God.*

II. *The Spirit in which this Work should be conducted.*

And,

III. *The Motives by which it may be enforced.*

1. *That all Believers are called to work for God.*

The work of personal religion is not that to which we now allude. That is included in those express injunctions, "Give diligence," &c; "Work out your own salvation," &c. Now, the work we refer to will be best illustrated by looking at some of the figurative descriptions given of the church of Christ. The church of Christ is likened,

1. To an army.

Every Christian is a soldier of the cross; every soldier is interested in this war every one the same enemies; every one in danger; every one must fight. This command belongs to each, from the greatest to the least. "Fight the good," &c. "War a good," &c. Now, this army is to make aggressive movements, &c.: to push the conquests of Christ onwards; to subdue the nations to Jesus, the world to his cross. It is not enough for each soldier to try to secure himself, he must be concerned for the prosperity of the whole, &c The church is likened,

2. To the human body.

This is fully set forth by the apostle, 1 Cor. xii. 7, &c. Now, every member, and muscle, and nerve has its proper function, and each contributes to the welfare of the whole. Then, in the text, the church is likened,

3. To a vineyard.

Those engaged to go into it, are expressly engaged to work. A proprietor never dreams of engaging persons, merely to eat of the fruits of the vineyard, or to be indolent in it, but to work; and when God calls and engages the soul, it is expressly to work in his vineyard. The parable of the talents clearly teaches the same momentous truths. "We are to show forth his praises who hath called us," &c. Let us, then, notice,

II. *The Spirit in which this Work should be conducted.*

In preparing to work for Christ, we should consider,

1. The talents which God has committed to us.

If all must work, all must have some ability, some qualification. Some have the talent of eloquence to plead for Christ; some of intelligence to devise, &c.; some of strength to work, &c.; some have time; others influence; others wealth, &c. We should consider how important to be in our right place.

2. The sphere in which Providence has placed us.

It is obvious all cannot occupy the same sphere. Some are designed to go forth into the wide world, &c. Now, there are three spheres which are open to every Christian.

(1) The Church. All may minister to the edifying or comforting of the Church. All may devotedly labor for her peace and pray for her prosperity The Church

its various departments of duty, &c. Opportunities of beneficence.

(2) The Family. Every Christian family ought to be a nursery for the church. You are to teach the way of salvation to your children. Educate them in the way of piety. Here, Christian mothers have a most important sphere of labor. Here you may work for God most effectually.

(3) The neighborhood in which you live. Now, your lights are to shine here especially. You can exercise your influence, present your example, give the kindly invitation, send the instructive tract, &c.; you can try to bring them to Jesus. Then, consider,

3. The spirit in which you are to prosecute this work.

(1) It must be in the spirit of cheerful delight. God would not have creeping things offered in sacrifice. God will not have the service of constraint, &c.; it must be voluntary and cheerful; we must run in the way of God's commandments; we must delight in the law of the Lord; we must serve him as affectionate children, not as unwilling slaves.

(2) It must be in the spirit of holy constancy. Instant in season, and out of season. The racer stays not till he has touched the goal; the warrior till the battle is ended. Having put our hands, &c.; having professed Christ, we must hold fast, &c.; having received the Lord Jesus Christ, we must walk in him. Now, we must work, though we may be maligned and persecuted, &c. "Be faithful even unto death."

(3) It must be in the spirit of deep humility. In religion there must be no boasting, no self-glorying. Philosophers and men of literature may boast if they please, not so the Christian. Before you boast, prove that you have done more than your duty; prove that the Lord has not rewarded you abundantly; prove that you have given the Lord aught but what he has first given you. See Paul, "less than the least," &c. How unbecoming is self-importance and arrogance in religion! After all we are unprofitable servants.

(4) It must be in the spirit of grateful love to Jesus. I am Christ's servant; I must not act to please myself or fellow men, but Christ. Any other motive than this, will render it unacceptable to God; whatever we do, we must do it in the name of Jesus.

(5) It must be done in the spirit of promptitude and attention. "To-day." To-day has its demands and opportunities and facilities, and they will never, never return. Every day of indolence is a day of which God is robbed; a day wherein we have lost the comfort arising from obedience, and accompanying reward at the last day. "Whatever thine hand findeth to do," &c. Resolutions, and plans, and desires, will not avail with God. The day must have its work, for the night cometh, &c. Now, let us consider,

III. *The Motives by which it may be enforced.*

Here I shall confine myself to three particulars,

1. The motive of obligation.

Now, this obligation is twofold; love and authority. Christ says, "Ye are my friends," &c. "If ye love me," &c., see Mark iii. 31. We must love Christ, both as King and Priest.

2. The motive of our personal well-being.

We cannot thrive in religion without the Divine blessing; this we shall receive in the way of duty. Our peace, our improvement, and all, depends upon our Christian diligence and devotedness. Spiritual indolence will cause our souls to be like the field of the sluggard. Our talents must flow, or a stagnant lake is produced; our energies must be laid out, or they will rust; our faculties must be employed, or they will be paralyzed, &c.

3. The motive of our final safety.

We must all be judged according to our works. Let me refer you to the case of the unprofitable servant, Matt. xxv. 24, &c. Mark, his sin was unprofitableness, not infidelity, not profanity, &c., John v. 28, "Done good," &c. Those who die in the Lord, "their works must follow them."

APPLICATION.

Should not the subject,

1. Fill each of us with shame and confusion of face? How little we have done for Christ, and for the extension of his kingdom

2. Let it stir us up to increased earnestness in our Christian duties.

3. Invite those who are without, to enter Christ's vineyard, &c.

SKETCH CCXLVII.

SIN, THE PLAGUE OF THE SOUL.

"Shall know every man the plague of his own heart."—1 *Kings* viii. 38.

THE love of self is deeply implanted in the human breast. We see this strikingly developed in the anxiety men display to secure health of body, and long life. You never need exhort men to be anxious about their bodily comforts and welfare. They will undertake long journeys, and expend any amount of their riches to secure bodily health and vigor. This, when not exceedingly excessive, is not wrong. God never designed that we should be reckless and indifferent, even to the blessings and enjoyments of this life. But how often is this the predominant, the ruling principle! How often does the body, and the concerns of this life, absorb the undivided attention and care of the mind. This is criminal. This is the infatuation of wickedness; unless we disbelieve in the existence of the soul, or doubt its immortality—it is deplorable folly. Ought the spiritual undying principle within us to have no care? Is the happiness and safety of the soul of trifling importance? Assuredly not. To this the Scriptures continually direct our attention. We wish you, therefore, on this occasion, to ascertain the state of your souls. "Every man should know the plague of his own heart." Observe,

I. *The Malady specified.*

II. *The Seat of its influence.*

III. *And the Knowledge we should possess.*

I. *The Malady specified.*

It is the "Plague." The term was originally applied to the odious disease of leprosy. It has, however, been generally applied to any deadly and infectious disease. Sometimes whole provinces have been desolated by it. Most persons must have read of the dreadful effects of the plague in London. Now, sin is likened to this awful malady. It is not merely a disease, but it is the chief of diseases—the worst and most awful of all diseases.

1. Sin, like the plague, is loathsome in its nature.

Man originally was invested with moral beauty. He reflected the image of his Creator. Now, his loveliness is withered; image of God is effaced. God, who beheld him with delight, and pronounced him very good, now beholds him loathsome and vile. His features are changed. The whole man is polluted.

2. Sin, like the plague, prostrates all the energies of the soul.

See that strong and vigorous individual, he inhales the polluted atmosphere, the head sickens; the heart faints. See his prostrated condition. So sin has robbed the soul of its spiritual energies Left man without strength.

3. Sin, like the plague, is exceedingly infectious.

One sinner destroyeth much good. Eve caught it; and Adam was immediately tainted with it. Look at heir progeny. Their first-born becomes the murderer of his brother. See how it pread over the old world, until God took a minute survey, and pronounced that, "The wickedness of man was great in the earth, and every imagination of his thoughts was evil continually." The whole world, says an inspired writer, lieth in wickedness; whole world guilty before God; none righteous, &c. Every nation, every city, every family, every soul of man, has been infected by this spiritual disease. Every member of the body, and every faculty of the soul is afflicted by it.

4. Like the plague, sin is awfully fatal in its effects.

Its temporary effects are dreadful. It debases man; it infatuates, and produces delirium; it annihilates his peace, and fills him with internal torture and misery. But it destroys the life of man; the life of the body; and throws him into the putrefying sepulchre, &c.—life of the soul; and finally, casts both body and soul into hell fire.

5. Like the plague, sin pollutes every thing with which it comes in contact.

The atmosphere of heaven was originally the balm of life and health. The earth—the garden of the Lord; and all creation happy. Now, bodily maladies infect the air, the earth is cursed; and "the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain," &c. God, in mercy, has sent innumerable blessings. Health, reason, food, raiment, are all perverted and prostituted to purposes of depravity through sin.

6. Like the plague, sin is incurable by mere human agency.

No man can cure himself, or deliver his brother from this fatal maladv. Human

reason has tried; human learning has tried; human legislation has tried; human systems of religion have tried; but never did any, or all of them, restore one plague-stricken soul. Each and all have failed. It baffles all human skill; it has defied all human remedies. God alone can save and deliver the soul from sins. But, observe,

II. *The Seat of its Influence.*

Now, that is the "heart." By the heart, we understand here, the soul—the whole mind of man. And be it observed, that the entire heart of man is depraved—that there is no soundness in it.

1. The understanding is darkened.

"Gross darkness hath covered the hearts of the people." "Man's foolish heart is darkened," Rom. i. 21. "Having their understanding darkened," Eph. iv. 18.

2. The will is perverse.

It doth not choose good, but evil It delights in rebellion. "The carnal mind," &c.

3. The affections are earthly and corrupt.

These go after the creature, and not after God. Are fixed on earth, and not raised to heaven. Are engrossed with the things of time, and not of eternity.

4. The conscience also is defiled.

Titus i. 15. Observe, then,

III. *How important it is that we should possess a Knowledge of the Plague of our own Hearts.* Notice,

1. How this knowledge may be obtained.

We may know the plague of our hearts.

(1) By a reference to the statements of Scripture, "The heart of man," &c. Christ says, "From within," &c., Mark vii. 21. The apostle says, "The works of the flesh are these," &c. Gal. iv. 19.

(2) By a solemn examination of our state before God. Converse with yourselves. Interrogate, &c. Examine; prove yourselves. You cannot do this faithfully without knowing the plague, &c.

2. Wherefore should we be anxious to know the plague, &c.

(1) Because ignorance of your condition adds to its misery and peril.

(2) Because without this you will never repent of sin.

(3) Without this you will never seek salvation.

APPLICATION.

1. Let the Christian look back, remember his original state, and bless God for spiritual healing.

2. Right knowledge of the plague of our hearts must be personal. "His own," not the hearts of others.

3. A true knowledge of the plague of our hearts will have produced humiliation, contrition, prayer, and faith in Jesus Christ.

4. A knowledge of the plague of our own hearts will only avail us here. In eternity there is no remedy, &c.

5. You who feel your sinfulness, now hasten to Jesus for spiritual healing.

SKETCH CCXLVIII.

GILEAD'S BALM AND PHYSICIAN

"Is there no balm in Gilead? Is there no physician there? Why then is not the health of the daughter of my people recovered?"—*Jer.* viii. 22.

GILEAD is the name given to a ridge of mountains, which extended from Lebanon southward, on the east of Palestine, and give their name to the whole district of country east of the sea of Galilee. This name was given in the ancient compact made between Jacob and his uncle Laban, Gen. xxxi. 48. This country seems to have been in great repute even in the days of Joseph, for yielding a sort of balm, which was very celebrated for its healing medicinal qualities. Hence, we read that Joseph was sold to a company of Ishmaelites, who came from Gilead, bearing spice, balm, and myrrh, Gen. xxxvii. 25. The prophet, after contemplating the morally diseased condition of the people, inquires, "Is there no balm?" &c. We have recently considered the diseased condition of man, as that of the plague: let us then with the prophet inquire, "Is there no balm?" &c. Let us then answer the three important questions in the text. "Is there no balm in Gilead?" We reply to this,

I. *There is Balm for the diseased Soul of Man.*

1. The word of God may be considered as the recipe given.

Hence, it is said, "He sent his word and healed them." It is called the word of salvation. No other volume in the whole world apart from this, can answer the momentous question, "What must I do to be saved?" This word reveals to man his state and danger, and the only remedy for

his guilt and misery. This is the only volume which can make us wise unto salvation.

2. The blood of Jesus is the healing balm.

All the blessings connected with salvation are ascribed to the blood of Christ. We are redeemed by his blood. Reconciled to God by his blood. Forgiveness by his blood. Sanctified and cleansed from all sin by his blood. His blood is the fountain opened for sin and uncleanness. There is in the sacred word an unvarying and essential connection kept up between the sufferings and death of the Lord Jesus, and the recovery of the soul from sin, to holiness, and God. "He was wounded for our transgressions. He bare our sins in his own body on the tree!"

3. Believing application to Christ's blood infallibly effects the healing of the soul.

As in all cases, the possession of a recipe, or even the remedy itself, is not enough without its application, so also in this. The sinner must come to the blood of sprinkling. He must trust and rely all his confidence in Christ's blood. He must plead it, as the ground of his hope, &c. with God. In this way, its virtue will be felt, and a certain cure effected. None ever trusted in the blood of atonement without obtaining salvation. However deeply-seated and universal the malady. However confirmed the disease. However fearful the symptoms. However hopeless in man's estimation. A dying thief was healed. Jerusalem murderers saved. And Saul of Tarsus also ob ained mercy. But, notice the second important question: "Is there no physician there?" We reply,

II. *There is a Physician for the afflicted Souls of Men.*

This physician is Jesus. In the days of his flesh, he went about healing the maladies both of the bodies and the minds of men. As a physician,

1. He possesses unbounded knowledge.

He knows all the faculties of the soul. He knows its state throughout. He knows he precise application necessary to its restoration.

2. He is distinguished for inexpressible enderness.

He deeply commiserates the misery of sin-sick souls. His bowels yearn over them He longs to apply his healing remedies; and this tenderness he displays to all who seek his aid.

3. He is accessible at all times and pla ces.

Thus, he is the whole world's physician. His practice is as wide as the earth, as universal as the family of man He is ever to be found, always near, and not afar off.

4. He infallibly cures all the diseases of the soul.

This can never be said of any physician of the body. They often err; remedies fail; patients die. Not so with Jesus: all diseases are alike to him. Spiritual deafness, blindness, the dumb, the lame, the paralytic, &c., the leprous. Nay, he can raise the soul dead in trespasses nd sins. And he never fails.

5. His terms are of the most gracious description.

"Without money, and without price." You read of no fees demanded, or given in the days of his flesh. It has ever been so, and will be so forever. So that the most abject can have access, as easily as the noble and the rich. Such, then, is the physician, to which the sin-sick soul can have access. Then, observe the last question in the text,

III. *Why, then, are not the Maladies of Mankind removed?*

We have spoken of a balm which is a certain remedy, and of a physician who infallibly cures; and let it be added, that this remedy is sufficiently efficacious to cure the whole world, and this physician is willing to save every man. "Why, then, is not the health," &c. All the reasons must be with the sick themselves; and none with the physician.

1. Many fancy themselves to be well and require no healing.

Christ had to do with these. "They that were whole." The self-righteous. So it is now, they are ignorant of the plague of their own hearts. They say, "They are rich," &c.

2. Many conclude their maladies are not dangerous, and therefore are indiffer ent.

The conversation and practice of thousands say, that sin is quite a trifle, of no consequence; therefore, they live carelessly, and die so.

3. Many try to heal themselves and thus neglect Jesus.

Like the woman with the bloody issue, who had spent all she had on physicians of no value. Some try penances, confessions, &c., alms, &c.

4 Many will not submit to Christ's remedies and regimen.

They will not attend to his advice as to food, air, exercise, &c. Will not deny themselves.

5. Many desire to be healed, but are prevented through moral indolence and apathy

Like the man who had been waiting at the pool, always allowed some one to prevent him. So these never are in earnest, or in time.

6. Many defer it to a sick-bed, and to a lying hour.

They never dream of dying in sin ; but at present, they have other concerns which engage their attention. How madlike this ! How uncertain !

APPLICATION.

1. Urge the restored to extol Jesus.

2. Urge seekers to an immediate application.

3. Warn the inconsiderate of their sin and danger.

SKETCH CCXLIX.

THE CROSS OF CHRIST

"But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world."—*Gal.* vi. 14.

By the cross of Christ is not meant the mere wood on which he was crucified. It is superstition, and not piety, which is strengthened by handling and contemplating crucifixes. Neither have we the least authority in the word of God for using or venerating the sign of the cross. By the cross the apostle refers to the sufferings and death of the Redeemer—that death by which atonement was made for the sins of the world. To glory signifies to boast —to delight. Three propositions will place the subjec of the text in its fulness before us.

I. *Those Things highly prized by Others, were despised by the Apostle.*

II. *That which was treated with the greatest possible Contempt, was the Object of the Apostle's Glory.*

III. *The Apostle had the highest possible Reasons for glorying in that Object.*

I. *Those Things highly prized by Others were despised by the Apostle.*

There is an obvious tendency in the human breast to boast of something else than God.

(1) The Jews boasted that they were the children of Abraham. So might the apostle ; but he did not. Pious ancestors will not avail, unless we possess their virtues and excellences.

(2) The Pharisees boasted of their great superiority over others : they were those separated ones ; the peculiarly holy of the people. Paul, in his ignorance, no doubt gloried in this ; but when he was enlightened by the gospel, the spirituality of the law and his own sinfulness were made manifest. Spiritual pride and glorying is monstrous in the sight of the Lord. Who can stand in the Divine presence ? Who be justified when he judges ? Now "less than the least," &c. Christ now all, and Paul nothing.

(3) Men boast of their learning and talents. So might the apostle ; but he did not. With regard to his education, it had been under the distinguished Gamaliel. He possessed a mind of the highest order, yet of these he did not boast.

(4) Men boast of their civil distinctions and immunities. And so might Paul. Besides being exalted as a zealous and distinguished Pharisee, he was a Roman citizen ; yet, however others might exult in these things, Paul did not. He cared no for wealth or worldly honors ; all these he counted but as dross and dung for Christ. We proceed to show,

II. *That which was treated with the greatest Contempt was the Object of the Apostle's Glorying.*

Every thing connected with Christianity was hateful and odious, both to Jews and pagans. "We preach Christ crucified," &c. In the estimation of the people,

(1) The person and rank of Christ were contemptible.

(2) His doctrines were so—humility meekness, and mercy.

(3) His condescension was so. The minister of the poor and of the vile.

(4) The universality of his Gospel was so, especially to the Jews. Hence, when

he referred to the widow of Sarepta, and to Naaman, they tried to cast him headlong, &c.

(5) His disciples and preachers were so. Fishermen, &c.

(6) But most of all his cross. In this his reputation and station in life were assailed. He now became as a slave, &c. His character was vilified; ranked with malefactors.

Hence his cross everywhere was a stigma upon his followers; and it has been so everywhere and to this day, that the carnal mind has hated and despised his cross. Yet this was the apostle's object of supreme love and glorying. "Yea, doubtless," &c. He wrote and preached about it everywhere; and this leads us to observe,

III. *The Apostle had the highest possible Reasons for glorying in that Object.*

From these reasons we must select the more interesting and prominent. Let us look then at the cross of Christ; and,

1. We see the curse removed from our guilty helpless world.

God "sent him not to condemn," &c. "The Father sent the Son," &c. But how did he redeem it? How roll away the black cloud of the divine displeasure? How? By becoming a "curse for us." He was tried and sentenced, and endured the painful death of the cross; he stood in the place of the transgressors; "he suffered the just," &c.

2. All the blessings of salvation flow from the cross.

Now let us trace the great and glorious blessings of salvation to their source.

(1) There is pardon. "In whom we have redemption," &c. Col. i. 18. "It behooved him to suffer, that repentance," &c. Hence in the supper, "This is the New Testament in Christ's blood for the remission of sins." Without shedding of blood no remission See Rom. v. 8, 9.

(2) There is peace. The heart in a pacified state, reconciled to God. This also comes to us through the cross. "Having made peace." Col. i. 20, 21.

(3) There is sanctification or holiness. How are we to be healed and cleansed? It was predicted, "In that day a fountain," &c. "The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth," &c. "Who loved us and washed us from our sins." "These have washed" &c.

3. The cross of Christ furnishes us with our only plea in prayer, and is the only way of access to God.

The way to the holiest is by the blood of Christ. Then what is the great argument which renders prayer effective? It is the finished work of Christ upon the cross. Here the covenant of peace was ratified; here all the fulness of salvation was obtained; here all the promises are made over to believers. There had been no throne of grace, no mercy, nor hope, but for the death of Christ. The sinner would have had law, and justice, and holiness and truth all against him.

4. The cross of Christ is the great incentive to the love and service of God.

"We love him because," &c. Nothing can soften the heart if this fail. The love of Christ enkindles ours, &c. Here we feel we are not our own, for we are bought, &c.; give ourselves back to God.

5. The cross of Christ is the only constraining power to induce us to exercise love and mercy to our fellow-men.

A sense of our obligations to Christ for his love and mercy to us, will fill us with compassion to our fellow-men. We cannot be revengeful, haters, malevolent, if we are the disciples of the cross. We shall imbibe the spirit of the Saviour, who exclaimed, "Father, forgive them."

6. The cross of Christ is the great instrument of the believer's triumphs.

How does he overcome the flesh? "I am crucified," &c. How the world? "By which the world," &c. How Satan? "Above all, take the shield of faith," &c. Faith in the cross. It was the death-blow to his hopes. Satan was spoiled on the cross, and flies before it. How death, the last enemy? Why by the cross, "Christ has died." O death! I fear thee not. Christ has overcome thee, &c. "O death! where is thy sting?"

7. The cross of Christ shall raise the world from the ruins of the fall.

It is God's great spiritual machine, to shake the heavens and the earth. "To overturn," &c. "If I be lifted up," &c. It is the wood cast into the bitter waters sweetening the streams of the world. God's standard shall never be taken down till the battles of the Lord's anointed shall have obtained universal triumph and universal glory.

8. The cross of Christ shall be the

ubject of the song of the redeemed forever.

In heaven it will be as the tree of life, &c. "Worthy the Lamb," &c. We shall probably forget science, and literature, and commerce, &c., but study the mysteries of he cross forever.

APPLICATION.

1. Have you experienced the saving power of the cross? Have you fled to it?

2. Do you glory in it? These are the evident signs. A reception of the doctrines of the atonement as the great cardinal truths of Christianity. A holy delight in contemplating the mysteries of redeeming love. A grateful devotedness of yourselves to his service and glory. A giving all the glory of salvation to Jesus, &c.

3. The rejectors of the cross must perish. No other Saviour, nor remedy.

SKETCH CCL.

PARABLE OF THE LEAVEN.

"The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened."—*Mat.* xiii. 33.

Here we have a cluster of rich and delightful parables, and so beautifully simple, that the most illiterate cannot possibly mistake their meaning. The one under consideration is exceedingly homely and expressive.

I. *Let us notice the Meaning of the Figures employed.*

Now there is,

1. The leaven.

By which we are to understand the truth of the gospel—the word of life. Like leaven, it is,

(1) Insignificant in appearance, yet,

(2) Powerful in its influence.

2. There is the meal or flour.

Now this refers to the heart. Here is proper material for usefulness, but must be prepared before it can be employed. The heart of man is capable of being laid out for God, and bearing fruit to his glory.

3. Then there is the agent.

"A woman" took this leaven, &c. Jesus employs his ministering servants to be bearers of his blessed truth; as he did his disciples to the multitude, with the loaves and fishes.

4. Then there is the hiding.

It was brought to, and put within the meal: both necessary. We must hear and receive the word into the heart; like Mary, the mother of Jesus, who pondered the things she heard in her heart, &c. Luke ii. 19.

II. *The Effects described.*

1. It leavened the meal.

Imparted its own nature unto it. So gospel truth imparts its own nature to the soul. It is a word of light, and illumines; a word of life, and quickens; a word of peace, and consoles; a word of purity, and sanctifies.

2. It leavened the meal silently and mysteriously.

So the truth of the gospel: it is internal and invisible; none can describe it; we see it by its effects.

3. It leavened the meal progressively.

Gradually, more and more.

4. It leavened the whole.

It is the will of God, even our perfection. We are to go on till we obtain the fulness of the stature, &c.; till all sin is removed, and all is holy and fit for glory.

APPLICATION.

1. Believers, cherish this divine influence.

2. Sinners, receive the truth in its quickening power.

SKETCH CCLI.

THE OFFER OF LIFE AND DEATH

"I have set before thee this day life and good, and death and evil."—*Deut.* xxx. 15.

Of all offices that man can fill, none is so deeply momentous as that of the Christian minister. The watchman who guards the city, and the physician who has the care of the body, both fill responsible stations; but the Christian minister—he is set to watch over immortal souls; he is sent to administer the balsam of life to the deathless spirits of his fellow-men. This great responsibility has been deeply felt by holy men in every age of the world. None seemed more deeply concerned to discharge it rightly than Moses. Hence, before he died, he was anxious to give the Israelites a complete rehearsal of the conduct of God towards them, and then he

follows it up by the most affecting yet faithful exhortations he could possibly deliver. Thus in the text he says, "See, I have set before thee," &c. Notice,

I. *The two Courses specified.*

"Life and good, and death and evil."

We shall take the latter first; that is, "death and evil." Now we observe,

1. That this is the course in which all men are involved by nature and practice.

"By one man sin entered into the world," &c. "All have gone astray," &c. "God looked, but behold there was none righteous," &c. "God has concluded all men in unbelief," &c. "Judgment hath come upon all men," &c.

2. This state is one of extreme wretchedness and misery.

A variety of figures are employed to set it forth. It is poverty, disease, slavery, blindness, &c.

3. It is only the shadow of the woes which await the sinner in the eternal world.

Great difference between the shadow and the substance; yet one is the emblem of the other. Now death and evil, which are before the sinner, in eternity must be viewed in the following light.

(1) All the favorable and joyous scenes in this life must be extracted. Hours of repose; hours of gratification; pleasures of friendship; scenes of hope, &c. Take all that is pleasing out, then,

(2) Allow all his misery to remain unmixed and incessant, and last of all, eternal. Incessant and eternal anxiety; incessant and eternal remorse; incessant and eternal agony; incessant and eternal despair; never-dying death, and unmixed and eternal evil.

Now that is the dark side of the text. Let us look at the other course specified, "life and good."

1. Life is presented to us.

For we are already dead, and life is the first essential blessing we need. Now the life offered to us is,

(1) Freedom from the sentence of death. We are condemned already; God offers to repeal the sentence, to blot out our crimes, with the penalty incurred.

(2) Regeneration of spirit. He offers to raise the soul, to quicken it, to put the breath of the new life into it, to take away the heart of stone, &c. Then,

2. Good is also presented to us.

The favor of God the chief good; the love of God in the soul; the peace of God in the heart; the grace and Spirit of God; the good providence of God; the good promises of God; the good enjoyments of God; and last of all, in eternity, pure unmixed good forever and ever—rivers of felicity, fulness of joy, and pleasures for evermore. Observe,

II. *These Things are set before us.*

1. Where are they set before us?

(1) In the word of God. In the law, in the prophets, the gospels, epistles, &c.

(2) In the ministry of the gospel. See the great commission: it is to publish these great truths. "Whom we preach," &c. Paul said, "I have not shunned," &c.

(3) In the influence of God's truth on the conscience. Do you not feel an internal something speaking to you, &c.. warning, &c.

2. For what are they set before us?

(1) For our solemn consideration. God has given us faculties to weigh, reflect, &c. God says, "Consider," &c. "O! that they were wise," &c. He complains, "My people will not know," &c.

(2) For our determination and choice. God throws the whole responsibility upon ourselves; he leaves it to our own decision; both are within our reach; he sets them for our decision "this day."

APPLICATION.

1. The way of life and good is easy and free to you all. Repentance towards God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. God is the willing Saviour of all men.

2. None can perish but those who willingly choose death and evil. Every lost soul has destroyed itself.

3. The necessity of *now* choosing life and good. Did you ever know the diseased man to choose death; the condemned man the shipwrecked man, &c.

SKETCH CCLII.

CHRIST'S FIRST SERMON

"And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up: and as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and stood up for to read," &c.—*Luke* iv. 16, &c. (See Sketch No. CLXXXV.)

In a former discourse we noticed the visit of Jesus to Nazareth, his attendance

in the synagogue, and the prophecy which he read to the people. We now have to consider,

I. *The Account which Jesus gave of his own Mission;* and,

II. *The Effect it produced upon his Auditory.*

I. *The Account which Jesus gave of his Mission.*

1. He refers to his divine qualification. "The Spirit of the Lord," &c. "Because he hath anointed," &c. The history of Christ's anointing is connected with his baptism. The priests of old were set apart to their offices by being washed in pure water, and anointed with holy oil. So Christ, by being baptized in Jordan, and by the descent of the Holy Ghost, chap. iii. 21, 22. The prophets of old were only enabled to deliver predictions by and of the Holy Ghost, "For they wrote and spake," &c. Kings also were consecrated with holy oil. Now Jesus came to sustain the threefold offices. He was the Prophet of prophets typified by Moses; he was the King of Zion, the Prince of the kings of the earth. But Jesus refers principally to his ministerial or prophetical office in the text, "Anointed to preach." Now observe, the Spirit was upon him,

(1) In unbroken plenitude. He had the whole of the Spirit of God upon him, not given by measure unto him. See John iii. 34. Others had it in different degrees, &c.

(2) He had the Spirit always with him. Prophets had not: hence we read of the Spirit being upon them to meet this emergency and the other. With Christ the Spirit dwelt and abode; so that all places, times, and circumstances were alike unto him. He refers,

2. To the fulfilment of a striking prophecy. "This day is the scripture fulfilled," &c. Every word of God is pure, true, and unalterable. Prophecy chiefly pointed to him. "Of him Moses in the law," &c. It behooved all things to be accomplished which were written in the law, and prophets, and the Psalms concerning him. Now was realized the first of those striking predictions which related to his great mission. Isai. lxi. 1.

3. He declares the character of his work.

(1) To preach the gospel to the poor. Pagan philosophers overlooked the poor. The scribes and rulers treated them with scorn and oppressed them. Proud arrogant human nature generally neglects and despises them. The arcana of science, the schools of philosophy, the temples of fame, were closed against them. Jesus came to have compassion upon the multitude—the neglected, the despised multitude. He came to visit, and to pity, and to instruct, and to offer the glad tidings of the gospel to the poor. The poor especially need it it suits their condition; and it is the glory of our Christianity, that "the poor have the gospel preached unto them."

(2) To heal the broken-hearted. Ours is a world of misery, a valley of tears; trouble is the lot of humanity. Well, Christ comes to allay the storms, &c.; to bless the sons and daughters of sorrow, &c., but especially those who are distressed on account of sin, and want inward peace. Jesus healeth the broken in heart. "He gives to those who mourn in Zion," &c.; he said, "Blessed are they that mourn," &c.

(3) Deliverance to the captives. Men are enslaved; the vassals of Satan; bound in the chains of vice; under the despotical sway of the prince of darkness; led captive by him at his will. Jesus came to free the souls of men from the yoke, and to give them liberty. "If the Son make you free, ye are free indeed," &c.

(4) Recovering of sight to the blind. Now here the figure is carried out. It was customary for the mind to be depressed when in a state of captivity; still more wretched by being bound in fetters; and worst of all when, like Samson or Zedekiah, deprived of sight. Thus Satan's captives are in blindness; the god of this world hath blinded them; they are in darkness and in the shadow of death. Now Jesus does what no earthly power could effect. He restores the sight of the captives of Satan; he anoints them with eye-salve, and they see; he translates them out of darkness, &c.

(5) He sets at liberty those that are bruised. Who have been wounded by the adversary; or who, for want of air and freedom, are diseased: he frees their fettered feet, breaks their bands, and fills them with joy, &c.

(6) He proclaimed the year of jubilee to the people. The very reverse of their former state; made known the joyful sound of peace and plenty, of rest and festivity The gospel era is emphatically "the acceptable year of the Lord."

II. *The Effect it produced upon his Auditory.*

1. They listened with marked attention, v. 20.

This was proper, necessary, pleasing. Some have their eyes closed in sleep, some gaze about, some look into their bibles and hymn-books; but they fixed their eyes upon the speaker.

2. They were filled with astonishment and wonder.

No doubt at his wisdom, but equally so at the tenderness, condescension, and love with which he spake

3. They were spell-bound, however, by prejudice.

They thought upon his parentage, &c., and were offended in him, and said, "Is not this Joseph's son?" &c. Jesus replies to their private reasonings, and shows how in past times two Gentiles were honored on account of their faith, &c.; widow of Sarepta and Naaman; and so it would be with himself and his message.

4. They attempted to murder the Son of God.

Truth flashed upon their minds, but they hated it; it exasperated them, and they tried to cast the messenger of mercy headlong down the hill, &c. "He came unto his own," &c. Jesus passed through the midst; he was silent; he was removed from their sight; he forsook the place.

APPLICATION.

1. To you Jesus has come with the message of life.

2. You stand in need of the blessings he bestows.

3. Do not allow prejudice to make Christ a stone of stumbling and rock of offence.

4. Embrace the message and live.

5. Put on Christ and profess him to the world.

SKETCH CCLIII.

NATHANAEL INVITED.

"And Nathanael said unto him, Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth? Philip saith unto him, Come and see."—*John* i. 46

How interesting and instructive the narratives of this chapter! Andrew, having found Christ, brought Simon, his brother. Then Philip finds Christ, and relates his experience to Nathanael. Nathanael doubts. His prejudices as a Jew, are called into exercise; but Philip addresses to him the language of the text, and says "Come, and see," &c. Seeing, in Scripture, is often put for knowledge; as such we must here use the term. We invite you, then, to come and see, or know Christ.

I. *What is necessary to a Knowledge of Christ.*

1. He must be revealed.

There must be a manifestation of the object. Christ has been revealed. God revealed him partly to our first parents, to the patriarchs, to Moses. To the Fathers by the prophets. By the Baptist. He manifested himself; now, in his holy word, by the precious gospel.

2. We must have capacity to understand the revelation.

Now, the gospel revelation is suited to man. To his fallen state; to the state of the illiterate, &c. His person, work, offices, &c., are all plainly described. "He that runs may read," &c.

3. This revelation must be brought to us. We must be invited. Christ must be set before us. The cross of Christ lifted up in our sight. Now, this is our happy lot. Observe,

II. *What may be seen in Christ.*

1. The greatest of all mysteries.

World full of mysteries. But he is the "wonderful." "Great is the mystery," &c. In him are united divinity and humanity; eternity and a span of time, power and weakness; glory and degradation; immortality and death.

2. The most amazing display of sin and holiness.

As the surety for man, see what he bears. Look at his life, sorrows death, &c. Here we behold the infinite evil, and desert of sin. But, behold purity exhibited, and holiness vindicated. How just God, and how spotless his Son.

3. Here we see the only method of salvation.

Christ is the way, the truth, and the life. No ladder, no foundation, but this. "No other name," &c. Only hope of Israel.

III. *Press the Invitation upon various Orders of Character.*

1. Upon the cavilling skeptic.

"Come and see." Come, you doubt the

cality of his history. Why despise his doctrines? Why reject his blessings? Why trample upon his ordinances and precepts?

2. The inquirer after salvation.

"Come and see." Here is what you need. Are you dark? Are you guilty? Are you polluted? Are you wretched? Have all helps failed? Here is the light and Saviour of the world. He says, "Come unto me, all ye that labor," &c.

3. To the mere formal professor

"Come and see" the Lord, not merely his house, or ordinances, or word; but the end of all, the Saviour of all, "the pearl of great price," &c.

4. To the humble believer.

"Come and see." See the depositary of all your blessings. See the Lord of your conscience. "Come and see." In doubts,—in afflictions,—in temptations,—in death, &c.

APPLICATION

1. A sight of Christ is essential to salvation, peace, and eternal glory.

2. Now, we may "Come and see." Death is coming.

3. Rejectors will see him to their eternal dismay.

SKETCH CCLIV

DIVINE REMEMBRANCE IMPLORED.

"Remember me, O my God, for good."—*Neh.* xiii. 31.

NEHEMIAH was one of those devoted servants of God whose character shines with holy lustre, and whose conduct is worthy of our attention and imitation. He lived in the time of the captivity, when Jerusalem was in desolation, and the temple was a heap of ruins. God employed him as an eminent instrument in his service; and his conduct was distinguished by great self-denial, great decision, great zeal, and great perseverance. Among all these great and arduous labors, he was noted for his fear of God, and his reverential conduct before him; and also for the spirit of prayer and supplication which he manifested on all occasions. If you wish to see a public man of God laboring in all things to promote the divine glory, and never forgetting personal, private religion, you have it in Nehemiah. After the record of all his labors, and trials, and achievements, the whole finishes by the beautiful and simple prayer of the text. Notice,

I. *The Prayer is one of conscious Interest in the Favor of God.*

"My God." The unregenerate does not acknowledge or love God. "Carnal mind, enmity," &c. To use this language in truth, there must,

1. Have been a dedication of the soul to God.

A returning to him. A seeking his favor. A yielding of the heart to him. God offers in and through the mediator, to accept of the believer. By faith, we receive him as the portion of our souls forever. "This God shall be my God," &c.

2. There is the possession of the Spirit of God.

"If any man have not the Spirit of God," &c. "Because ye are sons," &c. "The Spirit itself," &c. Now, this will be known from the state of the mind towards God. Fear, filial love, delight, &c. See Ps. lxiii. 1.

3. There will be the public acknowledgment and service of God.

"My God." The being whom I confess everywhere, whom I praise, in whom I trust, to whom I pray, whom I serve, whose I am, &c. Observe the text,

II. *Is the Prayer of conscious need.*

Our necessities are numerous and constant. Every moment we need the divine blessing. It is our happiness and safety to know this, to feel this, and to express it in prayer before God. But some seasons are specially seasons of need

1. In times of spiritual perplexity,

We need the guidance of God. No man can guide his own steps. We cannot see before us. Israel had a pillar of cloud and fire. David said, "Thou shalt guide," &c. "Commit thy way," &c. "In all thy ways acknowledge," &c. When beclouded embarrassed, &c. Let us then pray, "Remember," &c.

2. In times of arduous duties.

When we are called to extra exertions—when we require much working grace. This was the case with Nehemiah. God alone can make us strong to labor. "By waiting upon him, we shall renew," &c "Remember," &c.

3. In times of conflict and danger.

God's people are surrounded by foes

Our help is in the name of the Lord our God. He is our shield, &c. It is said of Gideon, and Jephthah, and Samson, that they accomplished their exploits by the Spirit of the Lord. So did David overcome the mighty Goliath. So we must do it, by the Spirit of the Lord, and the power of his might. He must fit us for the warfare, and teach us how to fight. "Lord, remember me," &c.

4. In times of sorrow and suffering.

When the light of adversity sets upon us. In the day of trouble. When afflictions arise; in bodily weakness, &c. Then the Lord is nigh to help. "Call upon me," &c. "Many are the afflictions," &c. Then we must pray, "Remember me," &c.

5. In the solemn hour of dissolution.

When we go the way of all the earth—when flesh and heart faileth. What shall we do then? Cast ourselves into the arms of the Lord.

"Leaning on his dear faithful breast,
May we resign our breath,
And in his soft embraces lose
The bitterness of death."

III. *This Prayer was associated with a delightful Retrospect of Services performed for God.*

See ver. 14, &c. Now, this was not mentioned in the way of merit. Merit, we can have none. But we may refer to these things, as a sign of the goodness of God to us in past times, and of his condescension in employing us; and likewise, with pleasing delight, that through the grace of God we have been usefully engaged. I notice,

IV. *That this Prayer God will assuredly answer.*

1. Through the immutable goodness of his nature.

"He will remember," &c. "He is good to all," &c. "But saints are lovely," &c. 'Oh, taste and see," &c.

2. He ever has remembered all his saints for good.

He did not forget Abraham, nor Jacob, nor Joseph, nor David, nor any other, from the foundation of the world. They are engraven on the palms of his hands. "As one whom his mother," &c. "Can a woman forget," &c.

3. Our own experience may give us confidence that he will "remember," &c.

"His love in times past forbids us to think," &c. He has not failed in aught &c.

4. The intercession of Christ render his gracious remembrance certain.

Rom. viii. 32–34.

APPLICATION.

1. Let us cultivate the spirit of the text. It is a short, yet full and fervent prayer suited to all times and seasons, &c.

2. Let the penitent adopt it. Call God yours—you may venture to do so. He is yours in Christ. Now, venture on him, venture freely, and say, "Remember me" &c.

SKETCH CCLV.

THE GODLY MAN'S DWELLING AND DEFENCE.

"He shall dwell on high; his place of defence shall be the munitions of rocks; bread shall be given him; his water shall be sure."—*Isai.* xxxiii. 16.

THIS chapter contains the denunciation of God against the enemies of his church; and it also contains the delightful engagements of God to deliver, and bless, and prosper his people. However the prophecies might relate to God's ancient people the Jews, there is much which is instructive and edifying for his church and people in all generations. Were God's ancient people but as a handful, compared with the nations around them?—so now the church of Christ is only as a small garden in the wide-spread wilderness of the earth. Were they subject to many enemies and perils?—so is it now; the whole world is in arms against God's church, and his Anointed. Helpless and insufficient as Israel was for its own defence, so even is it now: without God's aid, his cause would become the prey of the adversary. But as God never did forsake his people, but was their shield, and help, and defence, so now he is the confidence of his saints, and they "who trust in him shall be as Mount Zion," &c. Observe,

I. *The godly Man's Residence.*

"He shall dwell on high." I observe,

1. The godly man is born from on high.

Christ said to Nicodemus, "except a man be born again," (literally it is, born from above,) "he cannot see," &c., John iii. 3. Our first nature and birth are of the first Adam earthy, our second birth and

spiritual nature, are of the second, the Lord from heaven. Now the light which illumines, and the grace which changes the soul, are from on high. The spirit, too, mparted, is heavenly and divine.

2. His communion is on high.

Being a heavenly citizen, he holds intercourse with the skies. His thoughts and affections ascend on high; his wishes are on high; by prayer and meditation he soars on high as on eagles' wings; his conversation is on high, Phil. iii. 20. "Being risen with Christ," &c. See Heb. xii. 22.

3. His treasure and eternal home are on high.

Here he has no enduring substance, his treasure is in heaven; he is a traveller, his rest is beyond the skies; a mariner, his haven is the celestial Canaan; he is an heir, his inheritance is reserved in heaven for him; he is a prince, but his dominion is the glorious kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ. Notice,

II. *The godly Man's Security.*

"His place of defence," &c. He is liable to be besieged by the powers of darkness; storms and tempests may surround him. Now, his security is the "munition of rocks." God is the defence, the fortress and refuge of his people. Now, when his security is described as in the text, it denotes that,

1. It is complete security.

The word munition signifies fortification. Now, this fortification surrounds the good man, and all that he has. Every part of the Christian and all his concerns are in the Lord's hands, and all secure. What Satan said in reference to Job, is true of all the Lord's people: "Thou hast made an hedge," &c., Job i. 10.

2. It is invulnerable security.

"Munition of rocks;" not one of stone, made by the art of man, but one of rocks. Nature's massive defence, strong and high, defying alike the weapons of war, the desolating wind, and the roaring waters of he tempestuous sea. Within this defence,

> "The saints securely sing
> Defiance to the gates of hell."

3. It is everlasting.

Hence, we are exhorted to trust in the Lord, for "in the Lord Jehovah is everasting strength." "The mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting." Now, storms and tempests may affect the mountains, and wear away the face of rocks but the security of the Christian, his munition of rocks, is the everlasting God, the same in time, and death, and eternity "The gates of hell shall never," &c., see Deut. xxxiii. 27.

III. *The godly Man's Provision.*

"Bread shall," &c.

1. Now, this includes both temporal and spiritual supplies.

Body needs food and clothing. God will provide. Soul needs the spiritual provision, the bread of heaven, &c. Neither shall lack. This supply,

2. Is only of things necessary.

"Bread shall be given," &c. God can give more, may give more, and generally does so; but he only engages to do this. Hence, our moderation must be known unto all men. "Having food and raiment," &c.

3. The needful supply is certain.

"Shall be given." Think of his power goodness, truth; think of his tender love &c; think of his past kindness, &c.

APPLICATION.

1. Ascertain if you are the characters specified, ver. 15.
2. Rejoice in your privileges.
3. Honor and magnify God.

SKETCH CCLVI.

CHRIST'S PRAYER FOR HIS PEOPLE.

PART I.

"I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil."—*John* xvii. 15.

Jesus had now in immediate prospect, his sufferings and death. His active engagements on earth were completed. As the great sacrifice, he was now waiting to be offered up. He felt, however, deeply concerned for his disciples. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end; he had given them innumerable proofs of the tenderness and greatness of his love; he now lifted up his eyes to heaven, and bearing them in his priestly arms, presents unto his Father the intercessory prayer of this chapter. See from ver. 8. Observe,

I. *It is not the Will of Christ that his*

Disciples should be removed out of the World

1 It is not his design that they should retire into solitude, and abandon its society.

Many have supposed this is the only way to be pious, &c. It should be remarked, that we cannot retire from the attacks of the wicked one; it was in a lonely desert that he tempted Christ. We cannot go far enough to evade our own evil heart. Sin began in solitude, when only Satan and Eve were there. Besides, in solitude, we cannot attend to the great duties of religion, which respect our fellowmen. "Thou shalt love thy neighbor," &c. Social duties would be neglected. No scope for benevolence and works of mercy.

2. He would not have them to abandon the useful avocations of life.

God designed man to be active; he formed him to labor. Indolence is not only a sin, but the source of innumerable evils. In Eden, Adam was appointed to keep the garden, and dress it. Abraham and the patriarchs were husbandmen; Moses was a shepherd, so was David; Paul, one of the most highly learned and gifted of the apostles, worked with his own hands as a tent-maker; yea, it is probable that Jesus assisted Joseph as a carpenter.

3. Christ does not wish his people to have a pharisaical aversion to the society of the world.

The Pharisees would not have intercourse with the publicans and sinners. For this, they blamed the blessed Jesus. "This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them." We need not avoid civil transactions and proper intercourse, but this must be bounded; we are not to form close compacts with them. Not to be our confidents and companions. In heart and spirit we must be separate, and not be of the world, as Christ was not of it.

4. Christ does not wish his people to be removed by death, when it might sometimes appear desirable.

Often, in dark dispensations, his people have wished and prayed to die. Thus did Elijah, when he fled from Jezebel into the wilderness, and said, "It is enough now, O Lord, take away my life," 1 Kings xix. 4. Why, Elijah had much work to do; and in fact, God did not intend that he should die at all. So did Job, surrounded with despair and blackness. He said, "Oh, that God would grant me the thing I long for; even that it would please God to destroy me," Job vi. 2. But God had many years for Job to live, and many blessings for him to enjoy. The persecuted Paul had "a desire to depart, and be with Christ, knowing it was far better," yet, it was the will of Christ that he should remain longer, to be a comfort to the churches, and a blessing to the world. No doubt, the disciples would be filled with distress at the idea of Christ leaving them, "Yet," says Jesus, "I pray not," &c. Let us ascertain,

II. *The Grounds of Christ's desire for the Continuance of his People in the World*

He desires their continuance,

1. For their own sake.

It might appear at first sight safer and better for the new convert to be taken at once to glory. But let it be remembered that,

(1) Heaven is a state of purity. A holy meetness is not obtained at once, grace in the soul is like leaven in meal, like the grain of mustard seed. Habits of grace have to be formed, work of sanctification to be carried on. Maturity of holiness is necessary. "Corn must be ripe," &c.

(2) Heaven is a state of intelligence. There must, therefore, be the attainment of knowledge; the Christian here is at school. The volume of knowledge is in his hands. He is under tutors. What knowledge does the new convert possess?

(3) Heaven is a state of reward. Then there must be service done. There must be toil before the rest; warfare before the crown; faithfulness before the "well done," &c. He desires their continuance,

2. For his church's sake.

Believers are to edify one another; to comfort and aid each other; to present, in their collective capacity, a type of heaven.

3. For the world's sake.

Thousands and tens of thousands are in the world, who will be saved and brought out of it. Christ prays for these, ver. 21. Now, these are to be saved through the instrumentality of the church. The church is the pillar and ground of truth, the lights of the world, the "salt of the earth;" so their lights are to shine before men, &c. Christ is to be exhibited in his gospel, in his ordinances, and in the lives and examples of his people, who are to be living epistles &c. He desires their continuance in the world.

4. That he may be glorified in them.

Christ said, ver. 10, "I am glorified in them." Satan and the world would blot out the name of God, eclipse his glory. Wherever there is a believer, a monument of grace is exhibited. God is glorified in all his works, as in trees, streams, planets, stars, sun, &c. The Christian is a spiritual cedar, whose fragrance and fruit glorify God; he is like the refreshing stream in the desert. "The water that I shall give," &c. He is a star in the spiritual heavens, and like that of old, he is designed to guide souls to Christ. The heart, the lives, the profession, the worship of saints on earth, all glorify God. We see, then, wherefore Christ prays that they should not be taken out of the world.

APPLICATION

1. Do we answer the design of Christ in continuing us in the world? Are we advancing in spiritual knowledge? Are we ornaments to his church? Are we blessings to the world? Do we glorify God?

2. The time of our removal out of the world will come; the desert will be crossed; the voyage passed; the race run. Every day some of the plants of righteousness are transplanted; every day the church on earth is thinned; another and another is ascending to glory; we look abroad, and this and that friend is gone; another seat is vacant in our sanctuary. Let us, then, be found waiting for that momentous period, when we shall go the way of all flesh. This will be the saints' true and everlasting gain.

SKETCH CCLVII.

CHRIST'S PRAYER FOR HIS PEOPLE.

PART II.

"I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil."—*John* xvii. 15.

We have previously considered the former part of this passage:—First, That Christ did not desire the removal of his people out of the world—Secondly, We also noticed the reasons on which his desire might be grounded. We now have to call your attention to the positive request of Jesus on behalf of his people "That they," &c. Consider then,

I. *The Evil deprecated.*

It has been supposed that Christ referred,

1. To Satan the evil one.

As seems to have been the case in the prayer he taught his disciples, Matt. vi. 13. The same words are used in both places Now Satan is evil in himself; the source of evil to our race; the lover of evil, the propagator of evil, the patron of evil, and he goes about to diffuse evil. He had tried to subvert the designs of Christ, by his temptation in the desert; and Jesus knew that in every possible way he would labor to injure his disciples, after he left them in the world. But it might refer,

2. To the evil world.

Now observe, it is said that "the whole world lieth in wickedness." It is called an "ungodly world." Satan is called "the prince of this world," John xiv. 30. This world is Satan's empire: he reigns and rules in the hearts of its inhabitants; he diffuses his spirit into the world. It is under the sinful power of pride, enmity, disobedience. This evil world is a whirpool of danger; millions have been lost in it. It is a dreary desert; many have fallen a prey to the roaring lion. It is a pestilential hospital, where countless numbers have died of the plague of sin. Notice,

II. *The Prayer.*

That they might be kept "from the evil."

1. That Satan might not destroy them.

He is the avowed enemy of the righteous: he is malignant, powerful, and incessant; yet he is only a creature—a finite, limited being; he is chained; he could not touch Job's goods or health, without God's permission.

2. That the world might not allure or overcome them.

The evil of the world is presented in two opposite forms.

The evil of its smiles. It is the smile of falsehood and deception; breath of disease and death; it withers all before it; friendship with the world is death to the soul.

The evil of its opposition. Hence either smile or frown; if the smile fail, the latter is employed. Marvel not that the world hate you. If ye were of the world it would love you: the world loves its own. In the world ye shall have tribulation—its frowns

sneers, oppositions, dislike, persecutions, &c. Now many have been injured by the world; many allured, &c. Remember Lot's wife, Demas, &c. Many terrified; denied Christ; thrown down his cross. Observe,

III. *He commends his People to the Keeping of God.*

He says, "Keep them," &c. David says, "The Lord is thy keeper." It is also said of God that, in reference to the righteous, "He keeps all his bones, that none are broken." See Psalm cxxi. The priests under the law were instructed thus to bless the people. See Numb. vi. 24.

1. God alone can keep his disciples.

His omniscience enables him to see the condition, &c. His power: "he is able," &c. "Our God can deliver," &c. It is promised. See Jude 24; Rom. xiv. 4. Paul said, "I know in whom," &c.

2. God has engaged, and has ever kept his people.

Exod. xxiii. 20; Isaiah xli. 10–13; 1 Pet. i. 5, "Kept by the power of God through faith," &c. He has kept from the evil of suffering, and delivered from temporal sorrow; he thus delivered the three Hebrews, Daniel, Peter, John, &c. But God reserves the right of doing this, or of sustaining them in their sufferings. At any rate, he always saves those who trust in him from moral evil.

3. God keeps his people through the merit and intercession of Christ.

All our salvation, from first to last, comes to us through this source. He pardons, sanctifies, comforts, and keeps for Christ's sake. As our Advocate, he ever lives, &c.

APPLICATION.

1. What should be the pre-eminent object of the Christian's desire and pursuit? To be kept from the evils to which we are exposed. Every day and hour we should pray to be kept, &c.

2. Faith in Christ our intercessor is essential to our preservation. We live, stand, fight, &c., by faith.

SKETCH CCLVIII.

CHRISTIAN PERPLEXITIES

"Perplexed, but not in despair."—2 *Cor.* iv 8

THIS passage contains a twofold assertion.

I. *A positive,*

II. *A negative Assertion*

Observe then,

I. *The positive Assertion.*

"We are perplexed."

The term signifies embarrassment, difficulty, trouble, anxiety. The perplexity of the Christian arises from various causes. Sometimes from,

1. Darkness of mind.

No clear evidence of divine favor; weak enjoyments; gloomy prospects, &c.

2. Power of temptations.

Especially when duty and interest clash; world and character are at variance; or when, like a flood, temptations would seem calculated to bear away every spiritual support.

3. The prosperity of the wicked, and the frequent adversity of believers.

See Psalm lxxiii. 2.

4. Mysterious dispensations of Divine Providence.

As in cases of loss of property, of reputation, wickedness of children—Eli; distressing bereavements—Jacob, Ezekiel; bodily afflictions—Job; premature death—Josiah.

5. The non-efficacy of prayer.

Paul besought God thrice, but the thorn in the flesh was not removed. How many have been earnestly praying for important blessings for years, and yet the answer is delayed! These are some of those things which perplex the pious mind. We shall now illustrate the second assertion in the text, viz.,

II. *That there is no Reason for Despair*

1. These perplexities are not tokens of the divine displeasure.

See Heb. xii. 6; Deut. viii. 5; Psalm xciv. 14.

2. Every thing connected with your salvation remains the same.

The foundation; God's love; Spirit's influence; Saviour's merits; the precious promises, &c.

3. These things are intended to produce the most salutary effects.

As medicine is given to relieve the body in pain and sickness, so these things are intended for the soul's welfare. As fire purifies the gold, so these things shall purge away the dross of sin. And as the frosts of winter prove salutary to vegeta

ion, so all things shall work together for our good.

4. All our perplexing scenes are much easier than we deserve.

Much lighter are our straits and difficulties than many eminent Christians have endured.

5. The night of affliction shall soon terminate.

It may be nearly passed by some here,

> "For every beating pulse we tell
> Leaves but the number less."

6. In heaven you will be abundantly rewarded for all your sorrows.

APPLICATION.

1. Let the Christian rejoice evermore, and in every thing give thanks; knowing that the same love that gives him his daily bread appoints his daily crosses.

2. Let the impatient and the murmuring be corrected. "Why should a living man complain; a man for the punishment of his sins?"

3. Let the fearful and timid Christian take encouragement, and trust in the Lord Jehovah, in whom is everlasting strength.

4. Let the sinner meditate upon his final and eternal doom, where there will not only be perplexity, but fixed and eternal despair

SKETCH CCLIX.

THE UNPARALLELED GRACE OF JESUS.

PART I.

"For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich."—2 *Cor.* viii. 9.

When the apostles would press any duty on believers, they do it by placing before them the example and spirit of Christ; when they exhort believers to love each other, it is because Christ loved us, and laid down his life for us; when they exhort to humility, it is urged because Christ, "who counted it not robbery, &c., yet took upon him the form of a servant," &c.; when called to patience, we are reminded to consider Jesus, who endured the "contradiction of sinners," &c.; when urged to benevolence and liberality, then the apostle directs us to the facts of the ext, "Ye know," &c. Notice,

I. *Christ's original Riches*

II. *Christ's voluntary Poverty*

I. *Christ's original Riches.*

"That though he was rich." To no period of Christ's life on earth can this apply The text has no meaning if Christ had not an existence previous to his birth in Bethlehem. Now this statement is quite clear when viewed in harmony with the doctrine of his glory and Godhead; when we acknowledge the supreme Divinity of Christ then the subject is perfectly satisfactory, the prophet declared this, "Unto us a child," &c.; "They shall call," &c. Jesus asserted this of himself, "I and the Father are one;" "He who hath seen me," &c. The apostle taught this; of him he said, "That he is God over all," &c.. "God manifest in the flesh;" "This is the true God," &c. Then Christ's original riches must refer to his Divinity and Godhead; as such he was rich,

1. In the possession of all the attributes of Deity.

He was possessed of eternity of nature, of Almighty power, infinite knowledge boundless goodness, immaculate purity, and immutable truth: he was not only great but the greatest; high, but the highest, glorious, but the transcendently glorious Lord; King of kings, and Lord of lords.

2. In his proprietorship and dominion over all things.

Christ was the proprietor of the universe, and this was founded in his right, as the Creator of the world. "By him all things," &c., "without him," &c. We count a person who has an estate of a few miles rich. "The earth is the Lord's," &c Every world, through the immensity of space, go from planet to planet; traverse the whole solar system, and then pass beyond, through every system, and everywhere you are in Christ's dominions, for he upholdeth all things, and is Lord of all.

3. He was rich in glory, honor, and felicity.

All things reflected his own image; all things, save fallen angels and men, yielded him their tribute of praise. Myriads of voices extolled him together; all things were of him, and by him, and for him, every flower was fragrant with his perfume, every brook murmured his goodness, every breeze wafted his praise every sun

displayed his splendor, every star was brilliant with his radiance, every creature on earth and in heaven hymned his honor and glory, as the great centre of the universe all rolled around his high throne, and he received reverence from all creatures and all worlds. Now these riches of Christ were, (1) underived, (2) eternal, (3) inexhaustible. Observe,

II. *Christ's voluntary Poverty.*

"He became poor." Now this was not accidental, but the result of his own voluntary engagements, as the surety of our ruined race. Now the first step in this poverty was,

1. The assumption of our nature.

The condescension is inconceivable; an archangel becoming a worm, is the change of one creature into that of another, but the other was the union of eternity with a span, infinity with nothingness, grandeur with meanness, power with weakness, glory with degradation, consummated bliss with wretchedness and wo, God dwelling in the nature of worthless man, made in the likeness of sinful flesh.

2. He assumed our nature in its poorest form.

Behold his parentage, birth-place, his occupation, his circumstances, no gold or land, "The birds of the air," &c.; his attendants, his resources, tribute-money, had to depend upon wild fruit,—fig-tree. At death stripped of all his garments, was born with nothing, lived without any thing, and died without any article of dress; his body laid in another man's grave.

3. He was poor in reputation.

Solomon has said, "A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches;" and again, "A good name is better than precious ointment;" and how poor was Christ in this respect. He was so holy that he was without spot, yet he was called a glutton and wine-bibber, and a companion of publicans and sinners. He was represented as seditious and turbulent; a false prophet and sinner; a deceiver and madman; and as in fellowship with Beelzebub, the prince of devils. Hence he had to meet slanders and revilings everywhere, until he could say, "Reproach hath broken my heart;" and he was branded with crime, and at last put to a cruel and ignominious death, even the death of the cross. Thus, having taken all besides, at ast they took his life. We can never soar high enough to judge of Christ's original riches, so we shall never be able to fathom the depths of his mysterious poverty.

APPLICATION

1. Learn the vanity and worthlessness of all earthly good; see the contempt Christ poured upon it; they are uncertain and unsatisfying.

2. Learn how Christ hath sanctified poverty; he made it his own by choice.

3. Let us be reminded of our spiritual poverty: Oh! be rich in grace.

4. Let us seek after the riches of eternity; be anxious for a good title and an entire qualification for its enjoyment

SKETCH CCLX.

THE UNPARALLELED GRACE OF JESUS

PART II.

"For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich."—2 *Cor.* viii 9.

We have previously contemplated the original riches, and voluntary poverty of the Redeemer; we have now to consider,

III. *The great End Christ had in View in becoming Poor.*

"It was that through his poverty" &c Now,

1. The sinner's poverty is clearly implied.

We were poor. Originally rich in holiness, dominion, and felicity; but by sin man lost all, and became poor indeed. He lost his crown, his inheritance, his raiment, his health, his happiness; blind, and poor and miserable, &c.

2. Christ's gracious design is asserted; "That we might be made rich."

(1) Rich in knowledge, that we might know our state and remedy; might have spiritual light, &c.

(2) Rich in grace, in pardoning grace, that all our sins might be blotted out; in regenerating grace, that our natures might be renewed; in adopting grace, that we might obtain a place and portion in the family of God. That we might,

(3) Be rich in glory; heirs of an inheritance including glory, honor, immortality, and eternal life; "Heirs of an inheritance incorruptible," &c. It is further stated,

3 That our riches were to be obtained through Christ's poverty.

Christ had to merit our riches by the endurance of poverty, sufferings, and death; he came from heaven to lead us to heaven; he became the child of man, that we might become the children of God; he was hungry and weary, that we might have an abundance, and rest; he was degraded that we might be dignified; he was hated, that we might have the love and complacency of God; he bore the curse, that we might be justified; he died, that we might have eternal life; he descended into the grave, that we might be raised from the dead to eternal glory. All our blessings are through Christ; he is the medium of every mercy. Let us notice,

IV. *That this, on Christ's Part, was an Act of stupendous and unparalleled Grace.*

"Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ." Now grace signifies free, unmerited favor, the opposite of right and desert. Man, as a voluntary sinner, had a right to the curse, death was his desert. God, who was rich in mercy, devised a plan of salvation, that of infinite grace, that through Christ's poverty, &c. Now the stupendous grace of Christ was displayed when we consider,

1. The worthlessness of the objects.

Utterly undeserving, nothing good left, incapable ever of yielding a return to God; totally degraded, and wretched, and vile.

2. The sacrifice made for their welfare.

The person is of inconceivable glory; the price, the mighty sum, is of incalculable worth; it passeth all human understanding.

3. The riches obtained;

Grace and glory; abundant grace and everlasting glory. Observe,

V. *The experimental Knowledge Believers have of this Grace.*

"Ye know the grace," &c. Angels and demons, and wicked men, may all know it theoretically; but the believer only knows it by happy and saving experience.

1. They know it by its revelation in the Gospel which they have received.

In the Gospel this grace is made known; it is the glass in which they behold it; here it is described and published; hence it is called "the word of God's grace;" "the Gospel of the grace of God" "the grace of God that bringeth," &c. Now when this Gospel is cordially believed, then the grace of God is experimentally known.

2. They know it by its application to their souls.

Now this grace is essentially connected with every part of Christian experience. Believers are called by Divine grace; justified by his grace, renewed by his grace, sanctified by his grace, comforted, kept, sealed, and eternally saved by his grace. See Titus ii. 4–7.

APPLICATION.

1. Learn the true estate and condition of man in a poor graceless state. Let me press upon your attention; it is a universal fact, you cannot remedy it.

2. Learn the way of salvation Divine grace has provided; a Mediator in our flesh, one who has removed every obstacle at an infinite expense of suffering and humiliation for us.

3. Learn the greatness and glory of the salvation God has provided; he designs to make us eternally rich; these riches are provided, treasured up in Christ, and offered in the Gospel.

4. The extreme folly of indifference and unbelief; it perpetuates our moral wretchedness, and will finally sink into perdition "Ho, every one that thirsteth," &c.

SKETCH CCLXI.

SIMON OF CYRENE.

"And as they came out, they found a man of Cyrene, Simon by name: him they compelled to bear the cross."—*Matt.* xxvii. 32

THE day of Christ's death, and Easter, or the day of his resurrection, may be easily and correctly ascertained. These events being connected with the great annual festival of the Jewish passover, removes all doubt and difficulty in the matter. It is very different as to the period of Christ's birth, although it is certain it was not on our 25th of December, as kept. But whether in September or October, cannot be decided. The subject of which this day reminds us, is of the greatest possible moment. It is the basis of the whole superstructure of our religion. It is the great centre of the Christian system Without

it, we have no redemption, for we have no redemption except in his blood, even the forgiveness of sins. This theme should be the leading one in our thoughts and contemplations. It is ever important, and ever interesting. We can consider only some one point within the limits of a discourse.

I. *Let us contemplate the Condition of the Saviour.*

II. *The Circumstances stated respecting Simon.*

And,

III. *The Instructions suggested by the Whole.*

I. *Let us contemplate the Condition of the Saviour.*

1. Jesus had been condemned to die.

The history of this mock trial is familiar to all of you. Innocence had been associated with all that was vile. The prince of peace had been falsely accused of sedition; and the devotional Jesus had been treated as a blasphemer; and he, whose life had been expended in miracles of mercy, was declared to be the common enemy of man, and not worthy to live.

2. Christ had been condemned to die by crucifixion.

This was a Roman punishment, and was associated with all that was shameful and excruciating. None but the very basest were ever put to death in this way. Beheading was the common mode of Roman punishment. In this, then, Christ was reduced to the level of the vilest Roman slave; and thus it was intended that perpetual infamy should be connected with his name. It was a cruel and excruciating death. It sometimes happened that life was not extinct for days. It is said that Andrew lived two days upon the cross. Now, only think of the muscles torn by nails driven through the most tender parts of the hands and feet. Then of the succeeding inflammation and burning fever, scorching up all the moisture of the body, until delirium and death ensued. Now, this was the death to which Christ was adjudged.

3. Christ was now on the way to crucifixion.

As such, it was common for the transverse beam, or cross, to be laid upon the shoulders of the criminal, so that the spectators might consider the crimina as the sole cause of his infamy and death. However this might apply generally, it was utterly inappropriate on this occasion. Ever Pilate had found no fault in Jesus; and had attested his innocence by washing his hands before all the people. On his sacred shoulders, however, they had laid the cross; and it is obvious, he had borne it for some distance, when it became evident he could sustain it no longer. Nature was exhausted, and he fainted beneath the load. Doubtless, his enemies feared he might die before they reached Golgotha, and that they might be deprived of the horrid scene for which they so maliciously thirsted. Need you wonder that Jesus fainted? Just take a retrospect of the twelve preceding hours. Go back to the room where Jesus was sitting with his disciples, around the sacramental board. Follow him into the garden of Gethsemane—think of his unutterable agony there. See him prostrate on the ground, &c. Then see him rudely dragged to the hall of the high-priest, where he is buffeted, and smitten, and mocked. Then see him led to Pilate, from thence to Herod and back again to Pilate, overpowered by the clamors of the people. See Pilate giving him up to be crucified. Behold what succeeded, xxvii. 27. And after this train of sorrows both of soul and body do you wonder that he could sustain the cross no further? Now, this leads us,

II. *To consider the Circumstances stated respecting Simon.*

Simon was a native of Cyrene, a chief city of North Africa. Most likely he was a Jewish proselyte, and had come to the annual festival at Jerusalem. It appears, that accidentally he met the cavalcade ascending the hill of Calvary; and, at once they seize him, and compel him to bear the cross of Jesus. But why did they *compel* him to bear the cross? Because, none could do so without being branded with ignominy; and the lowest soldier would have felt himself irreparably degraded by it. The Romans dared not seize a Jew, and even Simon could not have been bribed to the task; seeing, however, from his color, that he belonged to the race doomed to be the servants of servants, they seized him; and only by the power of the glittering spears was this African forced into this degrading service. Now, let us consider,

III. *What are the Instructions suggested by the Whole*

1. We see in the death of Jesus the great antitype of the ancient sacrifices.

No sacrifice so completely pointed to the death of Christ as the passover. The victim—its being roasted with fire; its being eaten with bitter herbs, &c., all pointed to Christ, &c. So also the scape-goat, on the great day of expiation, was led into the wilderness by the hand of any man they met with; and that it was generally a foreigner. So here Jesus, when going forth to bear the sins of the world, had his cross borne by Simon, the Cyrene.

2. We see Providence overruling events, so as to secure the divine glory.

It was necessary that Christ should have aid. Here a bearer of the cross is provided. Besides, it seems clear that it was the means of Simon's conversion. His office brought him into direct contact with Jesus, and the miracles accompanying the crucifixion. He saw, and heard, and felt, as the centurion did, who exclaimed, "Truly this was the Son of God." His sons, Alexander and Rufus, are often mentioned with Christian honor. How diversified are the ways of Providence! "God moves in a mysterious way," &c.

3. Every Christian must be a cross-bearer, and have fellowship with the sufferings of Christ.

"If any man will be my disciple," &c. 'If ye suffer with him," &c. See Heb. xix. 12, 13.

"Shall Simon bear the cross alone,
And all the rest go free?
No! Christ has a cross for every one,
He has a cross for me."

4. Let the sinner learn the only way of salvation.

Christ has died for our sins, &c. "Whosoever believeth in him," &c. We have all we need in him. Ease from his toil. Health from his wounds. Honor from his shame. Life from his death; and salvation from him who was made a curse for us, &c.

SKETCH CCLXII.

ON SINGING THE PRAISES OF GOD

PART I.

"Singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord." *Col* iii. 16

We are led by the text to consider the delightful part of holy worship, singing the praises of God. This exercise is of very ancient use. We find Moses singing a song of triumph and praise to God, after the deliverance from Egypt, and the overthrow of Pharaoh and his host in the Red Sea; Exod. xv. 1. And the Old Testament is full of the subject of singing praises to God. This exercise was not abrogated when the ceremonies of the legal dispensation terminated; for we find the same delightful theme intersecting the holy pages of the New Testament; and the text is an authoritative command, and contains, therefore, the will of Christ on this subject.

I. *Let us glance at the Subjects of Public Singing.*

Here, the text gives us an express specification. "Psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs." Psalms, perhaps, have reference to the odes of David chiefly, or may refer to subjects of adoration and praise. Hymns, perhaps, refer to compositions expressing desires and confidence in God, &c. Spiritual songs refer to signal deliverances, as that of Moses, of Deborah. Judg. v. &c. So also, those of Elizabeth and Mary, Luke i. 41, &c So of Zecharias, Luke i. 68, &c. Now mark,

(1) The restriction in the text, Psalms, Hymns, and Spiritual Songs. Nothing vain, frothy, and trifling. As Christ is to have the throne of the heart, so all our songs must be spiritual, and to his praise and glory.

(2) We ought to be careful what we sing. Hymn-makers have filled their compositions with party peculiarities, with sectarian tenets. Many compositions are unfit—totally so, for singing. Hymns full of wrath; hymns concerning the miseries of hell, &c. Now, let us see that what we sing is according to divine truth, and is a fit theme for our holy songs.

(3) Now, let me say a word or two on the proper posture of the body in performing this exercise. Here, we have two things to direct us. The examples of Scripture. The Old Testament, 2 Chron xx. 19; in the New Testament the visions of John, as to the singing of heaven, Rev. vii. 9. Not a word in all the Holy Scriptures respecting sitting and singing Then, the impropriety of the posture. I

t reverent to sit? Is it not too familiar? Would we do so with an earthly monarch? Is it a natural posture? Now, I leave it to your serious consideration. Observe,

II. *The Spirit in which this Exercise should be conducted.*

1. There must be the union of the heart with the voice.

Else it is vain hypocrisy; offensive to God; pompous mockery.

2. We must sing with spiritual understanding.

See 1 Cor. xiv. 15. An intellectual act. Not with confusion. Not in ignorance, &c.

3. We must sing in faith.

"Without faith," &c. Believing the truths we express. Faith must be mixed with hearing, or we hear in vain. And with prayer, or we pray in vain. So also with praising God.

4. We must sing with grateful love.

Love must fill the heart, and gratitude must express it. Singing is the lifting up of an affectionate and grateful heart to God.

5. We must sing with humility.

Pride and self-complacency will spoil any service; this, God views with divine contempt. Prayers of this kind are execrable to God. So praises; and, perhaps, there is no part of public worship where we are in greater danger. We may be proud of our science. Our voice, &c. Oh, how we should guard against this! God hates even a proud look. How we should cherish reverence, and awe, and deep humility before God.

SKETCH CCLXIII.

ON SINGING THE PRAISES OF GOD.

PART II.

"Singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord."—*Col.* iii. 16.

Let us consider,

I. *The Times and Places appropriate to this Exercise.*

1. It is a proper personal private exercise.

James v. 13. "Is any merry? let him sing psalms." Now, we see this in reference to carnal songs. The ploughman, as he labors in the field; the mariner, as he sails across the seas; and the mechanic, at his bench, beguile the seasons of the day by singing. So may the Christian in his closet, or at his labor, he may lift up his heart and voice to God, and make the statutes of God his song in this the house of his pilgrimage. David must refer to this, when he says, "Seven times a-day I praise thee, because of thy righteous judgments." Ps. cxix. 164.

2. It is a suitable family exercise.

Formerly, it was considered an indispensable part of family worship. So, indeed, I think it is. Why do we read the word of God at the family altar, but because we are ignorant, and require divine instruction? Why pray? because we are sinful and needy creatures. Ought we not then to give thanks, and sing praises to God for our blessings and mercies? See Ps. cxviii. 15. In this way too, our children would be trained up in the delightful art of singing; and thus congregational singing would be greatly improved.

3. It is particularly a public exercise.

See that delightfully expressed in the hundredth psalm. See also 134th psalm. No scene on earth more delightful and heavenly than that of a congregation singing heartily, and as with one voice, praise to the Lord. How often have we felt,

> "Our willing souls would stay
> In such a frame as this,
> And gladly sing themselves away,
> To everlasting bliss."

II. *Let me urge upon you the Performance of this Exercise.*

It claims our regard,

1. As an obvious duty.

I think this is too plain to need proof. If so, there is the text, and Eph. v. 19. Yet, how few feel it to be a duty, how few prepare for its discharge as such! Allow me to notice the Scripture precedents, with some of the tokens of divine honor, which God has conferred upon it.

(1) It was connected with the manifestation of the divine glory, 2 Chron. v. 13.

(2) It was associated with the miraculous earthquake at Philippi, Acts xvi. 25 26.

(3) Jesus has sanctified and hallowed it After the eucharistic supper, it is said, they sung an hymn, and then went out into the Mount of Olives.

2. Consider it as a delightful privilege.

Contrast the assembly of the righteous singing hymns, &c., with the noisy, silly

multitudes of the ungodly. How we ought to rejoice that we see, and know, and feel differently! Contrast it with the chamber of affliction. All gloom; behold the sufferer; nature utters her feelings in groans, &c. Contrast it with the condemned spirits in perdition, who express their wo and despair, by weeping and wailing, &c. Oh, how glad we ought to be, that we are privileged to sing the joyful praises of our God. We urge it upon you,

3. From the disinterestedness of its character.

All other exercises of the mind may be denominated selfish, although properly so, as prayer, faith, obedience. But praise is the effusion of the soul, overflowing with love, and trying to give God the best return it possesses, for mercies enjoyed. This is all we can render to God for all his benefits towards us. Yet, although it is disinterested, we urge it,

4. Because of the advantages which attend it.

It is a sacrifice well pleasing to God. Heb. xiii. 13; 1 Thess. v. 18. It has an enlivening effect upon the spirits; it dispels the gloom of the mind; it raises the soul upwards towards the skies; and is associated with the happiest and holiest emotions of the soul. It is the same to the soul, as the refreshing wine to the fainting traveller.

5. We urge it, because it is the language of universal nature.

It is the homage all pay to God, except rebellious, sinful creatures. The mountains and valleys, the fields and trees, the stream and the ocean, the moon and stars. The sun as a young man rejoiceth to run his race. Many birds are peculiarly gifted, and fill the air with melody. All creatures have some mode of expressing their pleasures and enjoyments. Angels are always represented as delighting in it. How proper, then, that saints should join this universal chorus, and sing with grace, &c.! We urge it,

6. Because it will be one of the chief employments of heaven.

It is a heavenly science; from thence it came, and there it will be perpetuated through one eternal day. See Rev. iv. 10, &c., v. 9, vii. 11.

APPLICATION.

1. Let me urge all to join in this holy exercise. You cannot do it by proxy You hear and pray for yourselves So attend personally to the praises of God.

2. Let Christ and his grace be the chief subject of your songs. He is the gift of gifts. He is all, and in all.

3. Sing as in the presence of God, and not to please men.

SKETCH CCLXIV.

BENEVOLENCE OF GOD.

"God is love."—1 *John* iv. 8.

That is, benevolence, pure, universal, eternal benevolence.

I. *Look at the Works of Nature.*

See not only the fitness of things, but see how all bears the impress of love and kindness. Look at the necessities of man, and how abundantly they are met; look at the frame-work of his body, how constituted for enjoyment; look at the senses what sources of pleasure. Look at the vital parts, how they are protected from injury. Look at man, as gifted with rationality; this gives him superiority over all the brute creation. This enables him to rise higher than the eagle, to move more swiftly than the race-horse, and to emulate the courage and the power of the lion Look at the dignified inhabitant of the body, the eternal, undying soul; its capacities of knowledge, reflection, and spiritual enjoyment. Then look at the world, and its profusion of comforts, for the dignity and happiness of man. The earth is covered with a soft and verdant carpet; the expanse of the sky is of a most beautiful blue; the salubrious air is impregnated with the balm of life; thousands of rivers send forth their living streams; the fields yield their roots and grain, and the trees spread their richly-laden boughs to the hand of man, with an abundance of food and necessary raiment; the earth yields from its own bowels the materials of comfortable heat; the great orb of day sheds his golden beams, illumines the landscape, and makes all nature to rejoice; the darkness of night administers to man's repose, while balmy sleep, as nature's great restorative, prepares for the scenes of the coming day; the wind purifies the atmospher of its baneful exhalations, and the lightning

causes it to dispense its contagious influences abroad; the sea, by its saltness and motion, retains its healthful purity, instead of becoming a stagnant lake, which would destroy the world by its pestilential vapors. This, my friends, is a very rough sketch, a very imperfect outline of the truth which nature affords, that "God is love." Had he been malevolent, then the world would have been the very reverse of what it is. The benevolence of God is engraven on all his works. This truth is evident,

II. *From the original moral Condition of our first Parents.* See,

1. The dignity and dominion with which he invested man.

Made him ruler over all the other creatures, and but a little lower than the angels, &c.

2. The law which he gave him.

It was plain, easy, and therefore practicable.

3. The moral garb in which he clothed him.

His own image. He endowed him with every moral excellency; he had light, love, and strength to honor God, and to remain happy. That God is love, is evident,

III. *From his Conduct to Man as a Sinner.*

Man's crime was voluntary. Man's sin was a compound of an evil. He had no claim except to judgment; no merit but to deserve death. Here, then, we are called to behold the triumph of divine benevolence over the claims of justice, and unworthiness of man. And his love did triumph.

1. Behold his forbearance.

Adam flees, when arrested, trembles; but the blow is suspended, he dies not, but lives.

2. Behold the provision.

Sin must be punished; holiness must be exalted; truth must be vindicated, and yet love must be victorious. A substitute is found, one of sufficient dignity, one who volunteered for the work. God yields his Son to poverty, to reproach, to agony, to death, to endure the penalty of sin. "God so loved the world," &c. "Herein is love." Here, God revealed himself as he never had done before; God appeared in the form of man.

3. Hearken to the proclamation of the gospel.

The sacrifice has been offered, and the sinner redeemed; but he might remain ignorant of it; the gospel is therefore sent heralds are called, qualified, and sent to tell a rebellious world of the expedient God has devised for their restoration to himself. There are two things in this proclamation deserving of particular attention.

(1) The generosity of its conditions. The way of return to God is graciousness itself; no tortures; no self-inflicted pains—a softened heart, a supplicating and believing spirit. He might have appointed a course of bodily and mental penance, &c.

(2) The universality of its extent. This proclamation is as universal as the boundaries of our rebellious world; extends to every creature

4. Consider the provision of grace.

The gospel reveals an antidote to all the miseries of man; it restores him to the favor of God, image of God, family of God, and enjoyment of God.

5. Contemplate the riches, the glory.

Who can tell what God has laid up for them that love him? Think of the regions of immortality, the temple of life, the joys of eternity; oh, yes, every thing proclaims that, "God is love." The winds waft the sounds, &c.; the waves reflect it from their transparent bosom; it is emblazoned in the sunbeam; it is this which is the melody of the spheres. I hear no other sound in the groves of Paradise, in the walks of Eden, until the cloud had settled over the guilty heads of our first parents. I see the first promise exhibiting the same truth; I see it in all that Jesus was, and said, and did; his life taught it, his death ratified it, his resurrection justified it, and all his words in heaven plead it; while thousands of thousands all join in one swelling chorus in the church on earth, and through the extended temple in the skies. Let me notice, before we conclude, some objections to this subject.

1. The existence of misery. Now, the sufferings of men are the result of wilful iniquity; both bodily and mentally, this is true.

2. None suffer in proportion to what they enjoy.

3. The number are but as those in the hospital to the healthy in the city.

4. None suffer as they deserve.

5. All suffering in this life is designed as corrective.

6. The future punishment of the wicked. A monarch is not malevolent because he restrains violent rebels, &c.; a father is not malevolent, because he preserves the members of his family from the violent, merciless members of it. Observe, God does not design to punish, he tries all methods, it is his last and strange work, only when his love is trampled under foot.

APPLICATION.

1. Repenting sinner, believe it. Here is hope

2. Believer, rejoice in it.

3. Those who despise his love must endure his wrath.

SKETCH CCLXV.

CHRIST'S JOURNEYS OF MERCY

"And whithersoever he entered, into villages, or cities, or country, they laid the sick in the streets, and besought him that they might touch if it were but the border of his garment, and as many as touched him were made whole."—*Mark* vi. 56.

Of Jesus, it is emphatically said, that he went about doing good; the great end of his mission into our world, was to banish sin and misery, and to introduce grace, holiness, and felicity. Sin had converted our world into a desert, a howling wilderness, he came to make it bud and blossom as the rose. What a contrast between the first Adam and the second; the first brought a train of evils on body, soul, and estate; the latter, a train of blessings, &c.

I. *Observe the Characters referred to.*

"The sick." Now, sickness is the result of sin, the precursor of death; but there is soul-sickness, blindness of mind, deafness of soul, moral impotency, leprosy of pollution. Soul-sickness is the worst disease by far; it weakens, deforms, and, if not healed, destroys the soul.

II. *The favorable Circumstances in which their sick were placed.*

Jesus visited their cities, &c. Now, these visits,

1. Were designed, not accidental.

Christ had a work to effect, &c.; he came to work the work of his Father; he went forth purposely, &c.

2. They were gracious.

He went not to see the works of nature or the displays of art; he went to bless the wretched sons and daughters of man: he went not to inspect the records of their guilt; he went not as a destroying angel, &c., but as the Angel of God's presence the Messenger of mercy, to pity, to pardon, to love; good Shepherd. "The Son of man came to seek and to save," &c.

3. His visits were impartial.

Cities, villages, country, &c., rich and poor, Pharisees and publicans; only one qualification necessary, viz., misery.

III. *Observe the Course which they adopted.*

1. They brought their sick into Christ's way.

"Streets," &c.; means of grace are the ways where Christ passes.

2. They supplicated his healing power.

"Might touch," &c. What earnestness and faith!

IV. *The Results which followed.*

Connection between the sick and Christ, produced a cure. "Made whole." "As many." Not a failure; none but those who touched; there must be saving, vital connection.

APPLICATION.

What a glorious Redeemer! What provision for sin-sick souls! Let us feel for those around us, and labor to bring them to Jesus.

SKETCH CCLXVI

THE FATAL NIGHT.

"In that night, Belshazzar, the king of the Chaldeans, was slain."—*Dan.* v. 30.

(See Sketch 166.)

Belshazzar was the son of Nebuchadnezzar, who flourished between 500 and 600 years before Christ. During his reign, the city of Babylon, the metropolis of the Chaldean empire, was in its greatest glory. It is said that this city was fifteen miles in length and width; that it was surrounded by a wall of bitumen, 87 feet thick, and 350 feet high. It had a hundred gates; that is, twenty-five to each of the four sides of the city; these gates, with their posts, were all of brass; there was a street, corresponding with each gate, fifteen miles long, and 150 feet wide; that it had 676 squares, of two miles and a quarter in circumference. In addition to this, the city possessed splendid hanging gardens and terraces, two magnificent palaces, and the

renowned temple of Belus. The city, in addition to its impregnable wall, was defended by the deep bed of the river Euphrates. Such was this famous city at the time to which the text refers. At this period, the Jews were within it, in a state of captivity. The overthrow of the Babylonian power had been clearly predicted by Isaiah, 200 years before, xlv., &c.; and now this is literally accomplished, the last grain of sand is falling in the hour-glass of Belshazzar, his cup of iniquity is full, his career of impiety ended, the sword is suspended, the fatal arrow is aimed, and is about to be directed by the finger of the Almighty, &c. Observe, the circumstances connected with this momentous night.

I. *It was a Night of Dissipation and sinful Pleasure.*

The monarch convenes the company of his princes, nobles, and concubines; the evening is devoted to banqueting and intemperance; the intoxicating goblet is passed freely round, and nothing is heard but the sounds of revelling, and the din of maddening mirth. How many has the love and practice of sensual pleasure destroyed; our country has lost its most able and talented patriots, by the destructive influence of sinful pleasure; hundreds and thousands of parents have gone down to a premature grave, through the revellings of their dissipated children; homes have been desolated, wives' hearts broken, children worse than orphans through fathers being addicted to sinful pleasures; eternity alone will disclose the unnumbered multitudes that the tavern, the race-course, and the theatre have destroyed forever. It was,

II. *A Night of impious Profanity.*

Revelling leads to profanity; purity of speech is soon lost in the carousing bowl; here, on this occasion, nothing will serve the infatuated monarch, but that the vessels of the Lord's house must be introduced, to bear the intoxicating draught around to the thoughtless assembly. No doubt this was intended as an affront to the captive Jews, and in contempt of the God they worshipped Surely, Belshazzar must have known the events of his grandfather's reign, how the God to whom these vessels had been consecrated, had driven him to herd with the beasts of the field, &c.; but revelling and dissipation had prepared him for every thing daring and wicked; allow me to say, that infidelity and contempt for every thing sacred, is generally produced under similar circumstances; skepticism is seldom the result of deliberate reflection, but of the love of sinful pleasure. A certain amount of infidelity is necessary to render the goblet sparkling, and the draught delicious.

III. *A Night of recklessness and apathy.*

They were aware that the enemy, powerful army, was at their gates, yet relying on the security of the city, they gave themselves no concern. Now was time for reflection, but reason is dethroned; now they should have been watchful and vigilant, but they were sunk in intoxicating stupor. What a scene! a city engulfed in dissipation, and a powerful army undermining her walls. Yet recklessness is the natural consequence of dissipation and pleasure; these scenes blind the eyes of the mind, they deaden the moral feeling, they brutalize the passions, and sear the conscience as with a hot iron; how rarely are men drawn from the whirlpool of pleasure friends admonish, but they hear not; ministers preach, but they hear not; providence presents her appalling spectacles, but they heed not; health is undermined, and often, even when the last enemy is known to be at the door, they persist in their course of sin and death. It was,

IV. *A Night of supernatural Warning.*

See the banqueting hall; behold the guests; the king elevated, the goblets passing round; but behold, the countenance of the monarch changes, his eyes indicate terror, his knees smite each other, his whole frame trembles, the mirth is interrupted, fear comes upon the assembly as a whirlwind; and what has produced this astonishing change? Behold! upon the wall there is the appearance of the hand of a man; he leaves an inscription, which outglares the dazzling light of the banqueting hall; a few words are written, and the ominous hand retires forever; the wise men and soothsayers are called in to interpret, but all in vain. At length the queen the mother of Belshazzar, is called in, (for to her honor be it spoken, she was absent from this infamous assembly,) and she recommends Daniel. Daniel, the servant of God, is introduced; he refers him to the history of Nebuchadnezzar; then he refers to his own wickedness, ver. 22, 23, and at last, gives the fearful interpretation. Mene, which signifies numbered or finished; thy days are numbered, this is the last of them

Tekel, weighed; the balance is against hee. Upharsin, divided; thy kingdom is divided, the Medes and Perslans are now entering the city, and thy reign is ended.

V. *A Night of fearful Realization.*

The enemy had drained the bed of the river; the keepers of the gates, in their revellings, had left them open; the army passed into the city. The palace is besieged, and the banquet of wine is exchanged for the flowing of human gore, and that night Belshazzar is slain. Such is truly typical of the end of the sinner; he may revel, and laugh, and scoff, but the end will come, the results will be appalling; the sequel is inevitable death; "the wages of sin is death," &c.; "the wicked shall be turned into hell," &c.

APPLICATION.

1. Learn the infallibility of the word of God. Read with me Isa. xiii. 17, and xlvii. 1.

2. There is no security against God's displeasure.

3. The condemned, guilty sinner may find mercy by repentance and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

SKETCH CCLXVII.

THE SOLEMN SCRUTINY

(FOR THE CLOSE OF THE YEAR.)

"Tekel; thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting"—*Dan.* v. 27.

On a previous occasion we directed you to the various circumstances connected with the original application of these words. We now design to consider the passage in an accommodated sense. At this season of the year men generally try to ascertain the state of their temporal circumstances; whether they have been prosperous or adverse during the past year. The season itself is calculated to call forth our more serious feelings and prayerful reflections, that may be profitable to our souls. This evening, therefore, we wish you to ascertain really what you are in the sight of God: it is most important to ascertain this. Now let me guard you,

I. *Against all false and unsafe Methods of laboring to ascertain this.*

Do not weigh yourselves,

1. In the scale of comparative excellency.

This is a common but foolish custom. How many excuse themselves on the ground that they are better than others! Many rest entirely upon this. No doubt some of the old world were better than others: yet all perished who were out of the ark. So Sodom; so Jerusalem; so at the last day. You have nothing to do with others, not to answer for them, &c. Do not weigh yourselves,

2. In the scale of your own opinion.

We are not situated to bear true and impartial witness. "The heart of man is deceitful," &c. No man knows his own heart rightly. The Pharisees thought highly of themselves. So Saul, &c. Peter trusted his own heart, &c. What numerous cautions we have that we do not deceive ourselves! The man without the wedding garment; five foolish virgins. Do not weigh yourselves,

3. In the scale of the estimation of your fellow-men.

If you are not able to know yourselves how can those do it who have no access to your hearts? Men may err either way. They may treat you as Job was treated, or they may be deceived, as the disciples were with Judas, or the apostles with Simon Magus.

II. *We want you to weigh yourselves in the Scales of Revelation.*

In the balance of the sanctuary.

"To the law and to the testimony," &c. Try yourselves by the truth as it is in Jesus. See Heb. iv. 12. Here we cannot err. The word of God will make our true characters really manifest. And let me urge you,

1. To weigh your spiritual character.

Is it natural, or changed and renewed? Is it a character of guilt or pardon? Of reigning sin or reigning grace? Is it the old or the new man?

2. Weigh your principles.

True religion is comprised in two grand essentials; love to God, and love to man. "Thou shalt love," &c. Do you confide in God? Trust in God? Delight in God? Do you feel compassion for the ungodly? Do you love all the true disciples with pure hearts fervently? The language of the religion of the Bible is, "Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, and good will towards men."

3. Weigh your graces.

(1) Have you unfeigned faith? Faith

resting on Christ? Glorying in Christ? Trusting your souls to Christ? Bearing fruit to Christ's glory?

(2) Have you joyous hope? Good hope through grace? Hope like an anchor cast into that within the veil? Hope of heaven? Hope of a blessed resurrection?

(3) Are you clothed with humility? Do you feel yourselves to be dust and ashes? Less than the least of all saints? Is Christ all and in all?

(4) Are you exercising patience? In toil; in suffering, &c. Do you in patience possess your souls?

4. Weigh your experience.

And that in three things.

(1) In knowledge of God, of Christ's ove, of the Holy Scriptures, &c.

(2) In enjoyment; more peace, more of the love of God, and more of the mind of Christ.

(3) In strength. Can you do more spiritual work? Suffer more? Fight more?

5. Weigh your usefulness.

Are your talents consecrated? Do you feel God has an entire right to you? Is it your meat and drink, your prayer, your study, your sincere desire, to do good, and o live for eternity?

APPLICATION.

1. Weigh yourselves now, seeing all deficiencies may be supplied. God waits, Christ prays, and the Spirit is ready to do all for you that you can possibly need.

2. All shall finally be weighed in the scales of impartial justice. Let the careless sinner repent, and prepare to meet his God.

SKETCH CCLXVIII.

GOD THE REFUGE OF HIS PEOPLE.

"God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble."—*Psalm* xlvi. 1.

This world has often been likened to the sea, ever restless and agitated; liable to storms and tempests, and where myriads have been engulfed and lost forever. The Christian is a spiritual mariner, on this sea he is sailing, and he must cross it before he can reach the haven of eternal rest.

I. *Notice what the Text Implies.*

Now (refuge implies) danger, (strength) weakness, (life of man) ouble.

1. Danger.

This is placed frequently before us in the Divine Word; he is in danger from the wicked one, from ungodly men, from evils of his nature. He is a pilgrim, exposed to the thieves and robbers; he is a mariner, exposed to pirates; he is a soldier, exposed to hostile foes. Now this danger is the lot of all God's people, and it is co-existent with the Christian's life; it is incessant and perpetual danger.

2. Weakness.

Now this weakness has been felt and confessed by the most pious and devout; the more grace we possess, the more it will be experienced; a sense of it is indispensable to safety "When I am weak," &c. Christ clearly taught it, "Without me," &c. We find it when,

(1) Great duties are to be performed

(2) Great sacrifices made.

(3) Great temptations resisted.

3. Trouble.

Man is born to it. Good men have their peculiar ones; "It is through much tribulation," &c. "Many are the afflictions," &c.; grace does not exempt the mind under its influences.

II. *What the Text affirms.*

1. God is our refuge in danger.

"The name of the Lord is a strong tower," &c.; "He is the fortress and garrison;" the haven in time of storm. As a refuge he is all-sufficient; As the walls were round, &c.; "Wall of fire," &c.; "Who shall harm," &c.; "If God be for us," &c.

2. God is our strength in weakness.

He fortifies the mind; he gives energy and power to the soul; in him we have ability for all things; "I can do all things," &c. This is according to his promise. "I will strengthen," &c.; "he giveth power," &c.

3. God is our help in trouble.

(1) He helps us to bear them.

(2) He helps us out of them,—delivers us.

(3) He sanctifies them unto us, makes them yield real good; "All things," &c. Now God is a "present help," help near when we need him.

APPLICATION.

1. Learn the importance of self-renunciation.

2. Constantly depend upon God

3. How wretched the state of the ungodly amid the afflictions of this life!

SKETCH CCLXIX.

THE PRAYER OF JABEZ.

(A NEW-YEAR'S SKETCH.)

"And Jabez called on the God of Israel, saying, Oh that thou wouldest bless me indeed, and enlarge my coast; and that thine hand might be with me, and that thou wouldest keep me from evil, that it may not grieve me! And God granted him that which he requested."—1 *Chron.* iv. 10.

SCRIPTURE biography is oftentimes exceedingly concise, a few verses contain the leading traits and events of some illustrious individuals. But two persons in the world have been exempted from death, Enoch and Elijah; yet the history of Enoch's character, piety, and removal, is thus given, Gen. v. 22. Now of this description is the celebrated personage, the subject of our text. His whole biography is condensed into two verses, and he is never again referred to in the inspired volume. I was anxious that we should enter upon the Sabbath services of the new year, with some passage, that we all might feel to be appropriate and interesting. Let me then direct you,

I. *To the Being he addressed.*

II. *The Prayer he presented;* and

III. *To the Success he obtained.*

I. *To the Being he addressed.*

"He called on the God of Israel." Various terms are applied to Deity, all of which may be occasionally used with the greatest propriety. Now, do I feel the littleness of myself; am I oppressed with the greatness and majesty of Jehovah; then how proper is the title, the "God of Heaven," "God of Glory," "the God invisible and eternal." Or, do I feel full of gratitude for the divine goodness, then how applicable the title, "God of love, God of mercies, God of all grace!" Or, do I feel astonished with his providential interpositions, then how proper, the "God of Bethel!" Or, do I appreciate the forbearance of God, and his patience towards me; then I address him as the "God of pity, the God of patience." Or, am I elevated by the spiritual tokens of divine regards; then I address him as the "God of my salvation," the "God of hope, and the God of all consolations." But when Jabez addressed him as a devout Hebrew and worshipper of the true God, he worshipped him as the "God of Israel." Now as the God of Israel, his mind would revert to,

1. What he had done for Israel.

Separated them, called them, delivered them, highly exalted them. "Happy art thou, O Israel," &c.

2. To what he was then doing for Israel.

He was their constant defence and refuge; he was more to them than their munitions of rocks. Not only did he supply their temporal need, but he gave them his word, and prophets, and ordinances.

3. To his covenant engagements on their behalf.

And of these this was the chief, the great promise of the Messiah; the deliverer, the restorer, and the glory of Israel. Now God's Israel includes all the spiritual seed of Abraham, all true believers in Christ Jesus, God is the especial God of such. "This God is our God forever," &c.; "Happy is that people who is in such a case; yea, happy," &c. Yes, he is the God of all the families of the earth but he is peculiarly the God and portion of all who put their trust in him. Notice,

II. *The Prayers he presented.*

Now here notice four things,

1. For especial blessings;

"That God would bless him indeed." Now this might refer, I think, to the highest and chiefest blessings for the soul. Temporal bread is good and desirable, but heavenly is bread indeed. Blessings for the soul should be first sought; "Seek ye first," &c.; the best blessing is the favor of God, the love of God, the peace of God.

2. For temporal enlargement.

"Enlarge my coast." Now it is not improper to seek earthly good; many of the promises to the Jews were of this sort. "In all things by prayer," &c. Thus Jacob prayed and vowed at Bethel. We may lawfully pray for mental blessings, talents, gifts, &c.; or for bodily blessings, as health, food, &c. But these must be subordinately sought for, &c.

3. He sought the providential presence of God.

"That thy hand might be with me." He was sensible of his weakness, danger &c. Now we all need the divine hand to

be with us; this will support and hold us up, this will keep and guide us, this will ever supply our wants this will establish our engagements and make them prosper, all will be well if the hand of the Lord be with us.

4. He implored preservation from evil.

"That thou wouldest keep me from evil." Many sorts of evils, natural and moral. This evidently refers to moral evil, same as in the Lord's prayer, "Deliver us," &c., from the evil of the wicked one, evil of the world, especially the evils of our own hearts. It is happy to feel that our evils not only offend God, but grieve ourselves. Observe,

III. *The Success he obtained.*

"And God granted him," &c. Let us try to ascertain,

1 The cause of his success.

No doubt that the grace and goodness of God is the great cause. But God acts according to his own appointed means. Observe then, (1) Jabez prayed; many wish, desire, &c. (2) His prayer was agreeable to God's will. (3) His prayer was fervent and believing. "O that thou wouldest," &c. Observe,

2. The extent of his success.

"God granted him that," &c. He obtained all he sought; blessed indeed. Coast enlarged, hand of God with him, preserved from evil, &c. "If ye have not," &c. "Hitherto ye have asked nothing," &c.

APPLICATION.

1. Let me press these supplications as worthy of your serious attention; you need all these, you will need them all the year, &c. Oh! seek them now.

2. Seek them at the right source, from God, &c.

3. In a right way; humbly, through Christ, with all your hearts, and in full assurance of faith

SKETCH CCLXX.

THE WOMAN OF SAMARIA

"The woman then left her waterpot, and went her way into the city, and saith to the men," &c.—*John* iv. 28, 29.

FEW narratives in the gospel history have been read with greater interest, than the history of the Samaritan woman. It presents before us a series of instructive and important facts, which cannot fail to edify the devout and contemplative mind. It will only be possible just to glance at the more prominent parts of this portion of the gospel history. The first thing which meets our attention,

I. *Is the weary Traveller.*

This traveller is on foot, in homely attire, without one sign of temporal distinction or greatness about him.

(1) Who is he? He is the long-predicted Messiah of the Jews, the Saviour of the world. Yes, you behold in that traveller the Prince of the kings of the earth. But he is now on his errand of humiliation and mercy; he is now abasing himself, and appearing as a servant, although he thought it not robbery to be equal with God.

(2) From whence does he come? He had been in Judea, teaching and preaching the gospel of his kingdom. It appears that great multitudes had received his message, and had been baptized by his authority. See chap. iii. 26.

(3) Where was he going? He was going into Galilee, and his direct route was through Samaria; therefore it is written, "he must needs," &c., ver. 4. You will find, in his second visit to Galilee, he wrought one of his most wonderful and glorious miracles, the cure of the nobleman's son, which ended in his conversion, with that of his whole house, ver. 3. Notice, we have brought before us,

II. *A thoughtless Sinner.*

Such was the Samaritan woman. Her character is stated in ver. 18; but it is evident that she was ignorant of the plague of her own heart, living without God and without hope, &c., a personal stranger to godliness, very far off by wicked works; yet she was a bigot to the national religion of her country. The Samaritans had erected a rival temple on the summit of Mount Gerizim, and contended that theirs was the right temple and the right worship. Their first temple was erected by Sanballat, after the death of Nehemiah; this was destroyed about 130 years before Christ; but most probably had been rebuilt. Now between the Jews and Samaritans there existed a most deadly hatred; beyond buying and selling, all intercourse was forbidden; see ver. 9. It seems, then, this wo

man's religion (for such she professed to have) was wrong in every particular.

(1) It was national, not personal. She had no fear of God, &c.

(2) It was based on ancient custom, and not on God's word, ver. 20.

(3) It was bigoted and malevolent, and not the religion of love. Hence see how she treated Christ, ver. 9. True religion is personal, scriptural, merciful. Such, hen, was the woman. Notice,

III. *The happy Meeting.*

All seems accidental; Christ is on his journey; it was now the sixth hour, or about noonday; he was tired, and hungry, and thirsty; he rested during the sultry part of the day; he selects a well for the place, most likely designing to dine upon bread and water; his disciples were gone for the provision, and he is alone. But lo! a woman draws near—the person we have described; and here the Saviour and the sinner meet; the Physician and the sick; the Shepherd and the straying sheep. Jesus, who knew all things, had doubtless foreseen the event. How desirable that such a meeting should take place! How essential! Some of you know the time when you first met with the Saviour. Observe,

IV. *The Conversation of the Saviour.*

He asks for water, and thus elicits her natural bitterness of spirit. He then refers to her ignorance of the goodness of God to her in his great unspeakable gift, "If thou knewest," &c. Here she evinces her ignorance of spiritual things. Christ still proposes the water of life; he then reveals his knowledge of her sinful state and life, v. 17. Here he draws an indirect confession of her sins; he removes the refuge of lies to which she had fled, and teaches her the nature of acceptable worship; he declares himself to be the Messiah, v. 26.

V. *The Conduct of the Woman.*

1. She evidently personally believed in the Saviour.

2. She hastened to proclaim the Redeemer to her countrymen. "Left her waterpot," &c.

3. She was instrumental in bringing many to Jesus, v. 30–39.

APPLICATION.

1. Now Christ is amongst us by the preaching of the gospel.

2. What is the nature of the religion we profess? Do we know him, love him, &c.

3. Are we laboring to bring sinners to Christ?

4. No instrument too feeble to be useful in his cause.

SKETCH CCLXXI.

INCESSANT PRAYER.

"Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit."—*Eph.* vi. 18.

(Having noticed the nature of the Christian's warfare, the position the spiritual soldier must maintain, and the armor and weapons he must adopt, we must now consider the spirit and state of mind in which the Christian warfare must be conducted. See Sketches on Christian warfare.)

The soldier of Christ in warring a good warfare, must guard against extremes, as his danger is principally connected with these. He must not exult, so as to forget the necessity of fear and circumspection. He must not so fear, as to enervate and enfeeble his powers, and eclipse his hopes. He must not so rely upon his armor, or exertion, as to forget for a moment that all his strength and success are from God. He must not so trust in God, as to expect his blessing to descend upon a careless or indolent spirit. All these dangers will be avoided by obeying the directions of the text. "Praying always," &c Here we have,

I. *A Course specified.*

"Praying." Prayer, of all exercises, is most frequently enjoined. It is that for which all the godly have been distinguished It is essential to genuine piety. Prayer is the movement of the renewed heart, the breathing of the heaven-born soul; and thus the evidence of spiritual existence. Prayer is the language of the children of God. The first word pronounced is "Abba," that is, Father. Prayer is the soul resting with confidence and delight at the feet of God. Prayer is the uplifted eye of the soul, looking upon the face of its reconciled Father. Prayer is the soul moving confidently, and knocking at the door of mercy. Prayer is the holding out the hand of need, and having it supplied out of the divine fulness. Prayer is the ma-

king known of our requests to God. In prayer,

1. Let the word of God be your rule.

Ask agreeably with his revealed will. The living oracles will ever show us what to ask.

2. Let the promise be your standing place.

Here is the rock — unyielding rock. None of your steps can slide.

3. Let the merits of Christ be your plea. This will be infallibly effectual. All things ask in Christ's name. Thus, you lay hold of God's strength. "Whatsoever you ask the Father," &c. Now, this praying will greatly assist you in the warfare.

(1) You will obtain heavenly wisdom and skill: and this is necessary.

(2) It will materially benefit your armor, strengthen the girdle, increase your righteousness, polish the helmet, invigorate your faith; and keep the sword bright and sharp

(3) It will empower you for the conflict. God will strengthen with all power, &c. "They that wait upon the Lord," &c. The Captain, when almost overwhelmed in the garden, prayed, and then he arose from the ground strengthened, and finished his work. Observe,

II. *The Constancy of this Course is enjoined.*

"Praying always." These passages are parallel, "Continuing in prayer." "Pray without ceasing," cannot mean that the body should ever be in a praying posture, or, that the soul should be ever in the exercise and act of prayer. Other duties must have their place and attention. "Praying always," includes the following:

1. The constant cultivation of the spirit of prayer.

Now, this may be obtained. The habit may be formed. So that the exercise of prayer will be familiar and easy.

2 A due regard to all the occasions of prayer.

Certain seasons seem to have an obvious claim upon prayer. Some of these we would call,

(1) *Ordinary;* as morning and evening. Before and after; and also in public worship; and all religious duties.

(2) *Extraordinary* occasions; as before a journey. On making any important engagement. In time of trouble. In seasons of temptation and danger. Notice,

III. *The Manner of performing this Exercise is described.*

"With all prayer." Now this, I conceive, includes,

1. With all kinds of prayer.

Mental, and expressed. Enlarged, and ejaculatory. Public, domestic, and secret. The prayer of *deprecation*, as to all evil. Of *supplication*, as to all good. Of *intercession*, as to all persons.

2. With prayer for all things.

Whatever good we need, temporal, or spiritual. For body, or soul. For time or eternity. "In all things." "In all thy ways," &c.

APPLICATION.

Notice,

1. The passage suggests three ideas we have not included. Prayer must be "in the Spirit." Spirit of prayer. Words or manner will not avail, however pleasing, without this. Includes conscious need, and intense desire. Or, "in the Spirit of God." By his aid; with the atmosphere he forms around us. "The Spirit also helpeth," &c. "Watching thereunto." Watching for seasons, and against hinderances, &c. And for a return of prayer, expecting answers, &c. "With all perseverance." Not failing, not ceasing, &c. Even to death. It must be,

> "Our passport through the vale of death,
> We enter heaven by prayer"

2. This course will render the Christian soldier invulnerably secure.

3. Exhort the prayerless to seek the salvation of their souls. Imitate the publican, &c.

SKETCH CCLXXII.

AN APPEAL TO THE UNDECIDED

"How long halt ye between two opinions? If the Lord be God, follow him."—1 *Kings* xviii. 21

Notice the wicked state of Israel; the king, the patron of idolatry. God's judgments in the famine, &c.; the appearance of Elijah; the solemn trial of idolatry on Mount Carmel; Elijah's powerful appeal "How long," &c. Notice,

I. *The Evil referred to.*

II. *The Appeal made.* And,

III. *The Course recommended.*

I. *The Evil referred to.*

It is "halting between two opinions." In other words, it is indecision. Three classes of character are not included.

(1) The openly skeptical and profane. These bear the mark of the beast, &c.; make no pretensions to religion; many of them hate it, oppose it, persecute it.

(2) The decidedly sincere. Many grades in this class. Some very zealous, and useful, and spiritually great. Others feeble and weak. Sincerity is the test; and where such aim at loving and serving God in truth, God owns them, and blesses them as his people. There are,

(3) Those who are earnestly seeking God. Who are in an awakened condition; who are standing in the way, and inquiring for the good old paths, &c. Like the jailer, praying, "What must we do," &c. The undecided are those,

1. Who are found generally among the people of God, and are yet not of them.

Many, from educational influence; others, from the fears of conscience, cannot neglect the house and ordinances of God. Yet, they are merely hearers of the word. They hunger and thirst not after spiritual things, and thus "halt between two opinions."

2. There are those who avoid open impiety, and yet do not sincerely serve God.

Their souls would be horrified at being notoriously wicked. Yet God has not the heart. They are not spiritually-minded. Never felt their sins to be their burden, &c.

3. There are those who try to unite the world and the church, God and Mammon.

They call themselves industrious, prudent, &c. The truth is, their hearts are set upon the world. They love gold; and they are intent upon increasing in riches. But with this, they would be found in the company of the pious; and they wish their temporal respectability to give them influence in the church of God.

4. There are those who labor to unite works and grace in effecting their salvation.

Do not trust in either fully. But in both partially.

5. There are those who privately, but not publicly, profess Christ.

For fear of the cross, the reproach, the trials, &c., of open Christianity. Observe, then,

II. *The Appeal made.*

"How long halt ye," &c. Is not this indecision,

1. Highly offensive to God?

His first great commandment is, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God," &c. He requires the heart. He will have no compeer, no rival. To the formal, he says, "I would that thou wert," &c.

2. Is it not injurious to the interests of religion?

It will be a refuge of lies to which others will resort. A stumbling-stone to the sincere seekers of salvation. It will give countenance to indifference, and to formality. It is an infectious lethargy.

3. Is it not pernicious to the soul?

You can have no assurance of God's love. Therefore, no peace of mind; no holy joy; no pacific retrospect; no hopeful prospect. Like a man wandering in an uncertain maze; like a mariner without helm, &c., tossed hither and thither.

4. Will it not be ruinous in its consequences?

You have neither title or fitness for heaven. Think of the tares among the wheat. The man without a wedding garment. The foolish virgins. Consider these subjects, and behold your sure and inevitable doom. Notice, then,

III. *The Course recommended.*

"If the Lord be God," &c. You do not deny the existence and supreme claims of God. You know that he is your Creator Preserver, Redeemer, Judge. His claims are numerous, and irresistible. Then obey the text, "And follow him."

1. Give him the homage and service he demands.

Consecrate yourselves. "I beseech you," &c. Give him your whole heart.

2. Do this in the appointed way.

Christ is the way. No access to God but by him. One God, and one Mediator, and you must trust entirely in his merits.

3. Ally yourself publicly to his cause.

Follow him visibly. "Whoso shall confess," &c. Who is on the Lord's side? Let us go without the camp, &c.

4. Let all this have your present attention.

"How long," &c. Time is flying. Death

is hasting. The Judge is at the door. "Whatsoever thy hand," &c.

SKETCH CCLXXIII.

CHRISTIAN USEFULNESS.

"Be ready to every good work."—*Titus* iii. 1

One part of religion consists in obtaining a true knowledge of God, of the Saviour, and the way of salvation. Another part of religion consists in the reposing of the soul on the merits of Christ, and by which we receive justification, and adoption, through his name. Then, there is the passive part of religion, that which consists in bearing and suffering the divine will. But there is also another part, and it may be properly denominated the active part of religion, the practical part of godliness. It is doing God's will, obeying the truth, following the example of the blessed Jesus. Now, to this, the text directs our attention. "Be ready to every good work." Observe,

I. *The Course specified.*

"Is that of every good work." Every department of religion may be so denominated, repentance, faith, restitution, obedience, prayer, praise. But I conceive the text relates to those works believers have to do for others.

1. There is the work of mercy to the bodies of our fellow-men.

Body is exposed to suffering, to poverty, to sickness, &c. "It is enjoined upon us to do good," &c. If any man seeth his brother or sister in need, &c. Whoso remembereth the poor glorifieth his Maker, &c. Our fires will burn brighter, our clothes be warmer, our food sweeter, our slumbers more refreshing; if we tread in the steps of the blessed Jesus, who went about doing good.

2. There is the good work of compassion to the souls of our fellow-men.

How many are ignorant and out of the way. How many poor and wretched, &c. &c. How many perishing for lack of knowledge. Now, what can we do to lessen the numbers of the perishing? What can we do to win souls to Christ?

3. There is the good work of affection and kindness to the household of faith.

By abounding in affection and acts of kindness towards each other.

> "Then will the church below,
> Resemble that above,
> Where streams of pleasure ever flow,
> And every heart is love."

II. *The Direction given.*

"Be ready," &c. Now, here we shall notice three things:

1. The qualification.

"Be ready." Now, this implies,

(1) That we have the disposition. Naturally, we have not the disposition. But the grace of God always imparts it. If the heart be good, then we shall have dispositions of goodness. Have a willing mind. "To be ready."

(2) That we do good cheerfully. That it is not our burden. Not a sacrifice. Not a painful, but easy yoke.

(3) It is to do good promptly. "To be ready." To be at the call. Every thing nearly depends upon being in season. Angels fly to execute God's will. Jesus said, "Lo I come," &c. "It is my meat and drink," &c. Not to need pressing, or exciting. But promptly to be ready to every good work.

(4) It includes perseverance. Not to be weary. Not to tire. Not to cease. Always to abound, &c. Never to wish to cease, till the Saviour says, it is enough.

2. The extent of the direction.

"Be ready to every good work." As you have ability, and opportunity.

3. The motives which should influence us.

(1) Our religion is emphatically one of goodness. It is all goodness, no admixture of evil. It allows of nothing malignant, or malevolent, even to enemies. It enjoins it upon those who hate, who curse us, and despitefully use us.

(2) Our spiritual improvement is connected with it. It is by acting that we are conformed to Christ. Knowledge, profession, gifts, are only portions of Christianity. Love, and good works, are the very life, the essence, &c. This will make us rich in Christian experience, and meetness for glory.

(3) Our happiness is inseparably connected with it. It is heaven on earth. Heaven in the soul. The joy of angels felt and realized by man.

(4) Our future amount of glory is connected with it. We are to be judged by

our work, not by our faith, gifts, &c. No! I was hungry," &c. "Ye fed me," &c. Blessed are the merciful," &c.

APPLICATION.

1. Urge on the unregenerate the work of repentance.

2. Urge believers to be really, &c.

SKETCH CCLXXIV.

THE RICH WORLDLING.

"But God said unto him, *Thou* fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall these things be, which thou hast provided?"—*Luke* xii. 20.

It is of the utmost importance that we peruse very carefully the narratives of the divine word. It often happens that false notions are adopted through careless and inattentive reading. Many persons, when they have spoken of the rich man who lifted up his eyes in hell, have represented him as a very vile person, perhaps an infidel, or a very profane person. We have no proof that he was either of these. He was a rich man, at ease in his affluence, and careless of eternity—this is the utmost that can be said of him. So, also, of the person described in the text; he has often been described as a very wicked sensualist: now, there is not a word said respecting him which ought to lead to such a conclusion. It is obvious, from the connection of the text, that the man was lost through being a worldling. He was a covetous worldling. See ver. 15. Let us then consider,

I. *His Circumstances.*

These are described in one word. He was rich, prosperous. His ground brought forth plentifully. External prosperity is no sign either of the divine approbation, or displeasure. One thing, however, is very certain, that it is a state of imminent danger. We read of three striking cases in the word of God,

(1) A youth, whom riches kept from being a disciple of Christ.

(2) A professor, whom they destroyed, Demas, &c., and then,

(3) The worldling in the text, whose mind was entirely absorbed, so that religion had no place whatever in his thoughts. It is difficult to be prosperous and rich,

(1) Without loving riches. The love of money, &c. Whoso loveth the world, &c. (2) Without thinking ourselves the better and greater for these. How they puff up the mind. How men glory in their profession. (3) Without trusting in them, and not in God. There is danger when full, of denying him

II. *His Character.*

God gives it, therefore must be correct. "Thou fool." Now, his folly is seen in the following particulars:

1. In being anxious amidst profusion.

We say to that poor man, be not anxious: but the grace of God only can make him happy in poverty. But when you have a competency, why be so? When you are full to overflowing, why be so? Yet he was, ver. 17. How different to others, they had room but no fruits, no goods Blessings not sent to be laid up. No; but to be diffused abroad. He was a fool,

2. Because he expected his soul to be happy with temporal things, ver. 19.

Why, his soul had no appetite for temporal things. It wanted a good suited to its nature. The bird seeks its native air. The fish can exist only in the water. The body of man requires earthly food. But the soul is a spirit, an immortal, immaterial principle, and it must have spiritual food, or starve and die. But he tried to make an earth-worm of his soul. He wished to grovel in the dust.

3. Because he presumptuously calculated on years to come.

The uncertainty of life is most evident. Yet, this is the folly, that all men think all men mortal but themselves. Listen to this reckless boaster, "This will I do." Do not be positive. Is it not better to say, If the Lord will? "Soul, thou hast," &c., "for many years." "Boast not thyself of to-morrow. Thou knowest not," &c. Man is a thing of naught, his breath is in his nostrils, &c. Notice, then,

III. *His End.*

God saw him, and heard him; and then addressed him, "Thou fool, this night, &c.

1. His end was sudden and unexpected.

"This night." Like the unconscious mariner, who is whistling at the helm, and only thinking of the many months of his voyage, yet, who is approaching the rock on which he will split, and be wrecked, and perish. In the midst of riches; in the midst of plans; in the midst of hopes.

2. His end was unprepared.

He had prepared for his fruits, for the body, and for time; but not at all for the soul, and for eternity. These neglected, unprepared for, &c.

3. His end was dreadfully momentous.

Thy soul is required. By whom? By thy God. For what? Examination. Judged for its eternal destiny. The books are opened The trial. The sentence,—all awaits thee.

APPLICATION.

1. Do not idolize, and trust in riches.
2. Be anxious for your soul's welfare.
3. Come to Jesus. He will make you wise to eternal life.
4. Do not presume. Do not calculate upon the future.

SKETCH CCLXXV.

THE SWEETNESS OF GOD'S WORD

"How sweet are thy words unto my taste; yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth!"—*Psalm* cxix. 103.

It is not every one who can truly adopt the language of the text: the skeptic cannot; he derides, scoffs, and hates the word of God, the wicked and profane cannot; they care not for it, they dislike it, because of its purity, &c.; the worldling cannot, his mind is fixed upon the earth, and the grosser things of time, he has no relish for spiritual things, he prefers his ledger and day-book; the formalist cannot, for the word of God is a searcher of the heart, and it lays open and condemns that which merely has a name to live, and is dead; the humble and sincere Christian knows and feels the truth of those words, "How sweet," &c.

I. *In what Respects the Word of God is sweet, &c.*

The word of God is that which is suited to the state of the believer; it is agreeable to his taste, and refreshing to his soul. Now, this will apply,

1 To the doctrines of the divine word.

They may be compared to the planets of the solar system, of which Christ is the sun and centre. Redemption by Christ is the great basis. salvation through his merits, pardon, peace, and holiness in his blood.

2. The invitations of the divine word.

These are sweet; the hungry are invited to a feast, "Ho, every one," &c., the weary, &c.; "Come unto me," &c.; the needy, "Hitherto ye have asked," &c. as fallen, "O Israel, return."

3. The promises of the divine word

These are sweet; they are styled great and precious they are diversified, suitable, full, and certain; one, "I will be thy God." "No weapon that is formed," &c. "All things," &c.

4. The counsels and admonitions of the divine word.

In prosperity, in adversity, in health and sickness, we need divine counsel. God's word is the Christian's pillar of cloud by day, and fire by night; no other safe, unerring guide but this; not feelings, not past experience, not example. "Thou shalt guide me by thy counsel," &c. Notice,

II. *When the Word of God is sweet, &c*

1. It is often so in the public means of grace.

Here, it is often brought afresh to our minds, and our hungry souls are fed and satisfied, &c.

2. In private meditation.

Now, the word of God must supply the material, and by it, the soul is secretly refreshed and lifted up.

3. In the afflictive scenes of life.

Often without it would be in darkness in mental distress, in despair. See ver 92, 93, Rom. xv. 4.

4. In the hour of death.

I never read of a happy death-bed, where the word of God was not sweet, yea, sweeter than honey. The night of death can only be serene and bright, by the light of the stars of the promises of God's word, irradiating the scenes around us. It must be our staff as we pass through the gloomy vale.

APPLICATION.

1. Urge the daily reading of the divine word.
2. Do it with sincere prayer.
3. Our state may be determined by our love to this exercise.

SKETCH CCLXXVI.

MEANS OF SPIRITUAL GROWTH.

"As new-born babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby."—1 *Pet.* ii. 2.

The great end of the epistles was to preserve the new-formed churches of Christ from errors of faith and practice. To this end the apostles, inspired by the Holy Spirit, endeavored to enlighten and direct the new converts to those means by which their spiritual security might be effected. Notice,

I. *The Characters addressed.*

"New-born babes." Now, by this beautiful figure we are referred,

1. To the character of true believers.

The people of God are all born again. We cannot be in the kingdom of Christ unless we have been born in it. "Except a man," &c. "To such as receive," Christ has given the privilege of the sons of God; this applies to all the household of faith; no religion, no Christianity, but what is based upon regeneration. Then the figure directs us,

2. To the dispositions of true believers.

"New-born babes." The absence of guile, hypocrisy, and deceit; the absence of anxiety; the absence of pride, hatred, and malice; love, humility, &c., these are the holy and lovely parts of the Christian character. The subject directs,

3. To the entire dependence of the believer.

We cannot conceive of more total dependence and helplessness than is seen in a little child. Now, this is our condition. Jesus has taught us this, "Without me ye can do nothing," not, you cannot do all things, but nothing. But the figure shows us,

4. That the state of believers is an improving one.

How speedily the babe alters in its appearance; its limbs grow, it becomes daily more strong; that child is the stamina of the future man; now it is a babe, but who can tell what it will be; that babe is an immortal spirit in embyo. So the believer, he is only the germ of future greatness and future glory. Observe,

II. *The great Object referred to.*

That "as new-born babes they may grow." The design of ordinances and promise and influences, is that they may grow. Now, our growth should respect three things.

1. Knowledge.

Grow in knowledge and spiritual understanding. Then we must grow,

2. In strength.

How weak the babe; how weak the new-born believer; cannot do much, nor bear much, nor overcome much. Now, we must aim at being strong in the Lord, &c.

3. In resemblance to God's holy image

In the babe is seen the image of the Father. We are to labor to imitate the blessed Deity, to follow him as dear children. Now, how are we thus to grow? This leads us,

III. *To the Means specified.*

Now it is to be effected,

1. By the word.

Compared to milk, suited to our state word of knowledge, word of power, word of holiness. "All we with open face,' &c. "Whereby are given to us great and precious promises," &c.

2. It must be the pure word.

"The sincere milk of the word." It must not have any mixture; not with Jewish glosses and conceit; not with the wisdom of philosophy; no, it must be the unadulterated truth; the word of God, as it flows from the eternal fountain of purity.

3. It must be desired.

The babe, by instinct, desires the milk; so we must feel our hearts set upon it; hunger and thirst after it, and labor to obtain it at all times and in all places, and being earnestly desired, it must be received and digested, and thus it will be incorporated with our strength and we shall grow thereby.

APPLICATION

1. Bless God for the suitable, ample provision of his word.

2. Remember, the great end of it is, your growth in knowledge and holiness.

3. Ardently long for it. Value it as precious gold, better than thousands of gold and silver.

SKETCH CCLXXVII.

HUMAN IMPERFECTIONS

"For there is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good and sinneth not."—*Eccles.* vii. 20

Variety meets our eye in every department of the works of God. No doubt the world of mind would be found to be as varied as the world of matter. The same observation will apply to the moral features of the children of God; all degrees of knowledge, holiness, and goodness; one spiritual star, &c.; some babes in Christ; some ripening for glory. One truth applies to the whole, "There is not," &c. Notice,

I. *The Truth asserted.*

Not a perfectly just, good, and sinless man.

1. The most signalized of the people of God were not sinless and perfect.

Noah, Abraham, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Aaron, David, and Elijah. Look at New Testament times; the disciples, James and John, desired fire from heaven, &c. Peter, Paul, and Barnabas.

2. The work of sanctification is progressive.

And this includes the daily mortification of sin. See Paul's description, Rom. vii. "I am crucified," &c. "Mortify," &c.

3. The prayer Christ taught his disciples establishes it.

"Forgive us," &c. Here sin is implied.

4. The sensible experience of God's children evidences it.

Let their actions, words, thoughts, and desires, be brought to the divine law; a law so vast and searching, and requiring absolute and undeviating obedience.

II. *The Use believers should make of this Truth.*

1. It should produce deepest abasement of mind.

No pride or self-complacency; no self-trust, &c. The dust is our place.

2. Daily confession and prayer to God.

We are not to cover, but to confess and seek mercy.

3. Constantly resting on the work of Christ, and on the blood of the atonement.

What should we do but for this fountain. Here we must rest, &c. "Make mention of his righteousness," &c.

4. To avoid setting before us human examples.

We must walk after the perfect model. This only in Christ. "Without sin" belongs to Jesus only.

5. To cultivate a holy vigilance over ourselves.

"Watch and pray" &c. "What I say unto all," &c. How necessary always to fear.

6. To cherish holy confidence and avoid despair.

God did not cast them off in days of old. "He knoweth," &c.

7. To seek after meetness for eternal glory.

Always pressing onwards. More and more of Christ's mind, &c.

SKETCH CCLXXVIII

FELLOWSHIP WITH CHRIST'S SUFFERINGS.

"And the fellowship of his sufferings."—*Phil.* iii 10

Paul not only wished to have Christ's benefits, but desires, viz., That he might "have fellowship with Christ in his sufferings." Now, when may it be said that we have fellowship with Christ's sufferings? And, why should we desire it?

I. *When may it be said we have Fellowship with Christ's Sufferings?*

1. When we suffer for his sake.

Christ's cause and the believer's are one. He suffered for us, and was himself made perfect by suffering. We are called to suffer for him, and thus to have fellowship with him. "If any man will come after me," &c. "It is through much tribulation," &c. "All that will live godly," &c.

2. When we suffer in his Spirit.

That is, meekly, patiently, prayerfully &c.

3. When we suffer to his glory.

Religion honored; our graces displayed; Christ's name magnified. As Nebuchadnezzar exalted God; and Darius also.

II. *Why should we desire it?*

1. Because it is the will of God.

He designs we should suffer as well as labor. It is our all-wise and all-gracious appointment. We ought to be of one mind with God.

2. From grateful affection for Jesus.

We cannot repay his love: but we can manifest our readiness to suffer for him. Our sacrifices prove the sincerity of our hearts.

3. On account of their sanctifying tendency.

Sufferings tend to humble us; tend to refine us. Like fire, frost, storms, &c. Correct our evil propensities. Render

Christ more precious, and heaven more desirable.

4. On account of the promises connected with them.

"If we suffer," &c. If we confess him, and bear the cross, &c. If we follow his steps, &c. "If we overcome," &c.

APPLICATION.

1. Expect to suffer for Christ's sake.
2. Prepare to suffer for Christ's sake.
3. Rejoice in your sufferings for Christ's sake.

SKETCH CCLXXIX

THE WORK OF RELIGION.

"Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ."—*Philip.* i. 6.

THIS delightful epistle to the church at Philippi, was sent from Paul, who was now a prisoner at Rome, about twelve years after he had first preached the gospel among them. The apostle commences it with the most ardent expression of good-will and love to them, v. 21. He informs them that it had long been his custom both to bless God on their account, and fervently to remember them in all his prayers, ver. 3–6. Then he expresses his perfect confidence in the preserving grace of God respecting them. "Being confident," &c. We shall endeavor to found several observations on the truths contained in the text.

I. *True Religion is an internal Work.*

Not a system of notions; not merely a public profession; not external propriety; all these are parts, and included, but true religion is a work in the heart.

(1) Work of light upon the understanding.

(2) Work of truth influencing the judgment.

(3) Work of love softening the affections.

(4) Work of holiness cleansing the conscience.

(5) Work of grace entirely changing the heart.

II. *True Religion has God for its Author.*

"He who hath," &c. 2 Cor. iv. 6; Eph. 10.

(1) God called us by his word

(2) He justified us by his grace.

(3) Regenerated us by his Spirit.

III. *True Religion is a Work pre-eminently excellent.*

"A good work." Called a "good part." "Mary hath chosen," &c. It is good, as liberty is good, as health is good, as life is good, as abiding felicity is good; good for ourselves, for our friends, for the world, for time, death, and eternity.

IV. *True Religion is progressive in its Character.*

It must be so, as it is,

(1) Compared to the progress of the grain in the earth.

(2) To the light of the day.

(3) To the growth of the child.

(4) To the erection of a building.

V. *True Religion will be carried on and completed by God in the Hearts of his People.*

"He who hath," &c. He does this by his word directing, his Spirit comforting, his grace supporting. Of this, all believers might be confident. "Being confident."

(1) From God's engagements, "He is faithful."

(2) From his love and delight in them.

(3) From the history of his people in every age. Did he ever leave or forsake any of them.

APPLICATION.

1. Is this work commenced? Have you the signs, &c.
2. God will work with and by you. Be diligent.
3. Anticipate its glorious consummation

SKETCH CCLXXX.

THE CERTAIN DOOM OF THOSE WHO LOVE NOT THE SAVIOUR.

"If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha"—1 *Cor.* xvi. 22.

NOTHING is more delightful than to expatiate on the goodness of God, and the grace of the Redeemer. "How beautiful on the mountains," &c. To bring wretched dying sinners glad tidings of great joy. To tell the sick of a physician; the poor, of riches; the miserable of felicity; the dying, of life; and the

lost, of a Saviour, and a better world. But there is another department of the Christian ministry not so pleasant; and that is, to speak of the terrors of the Lord. To employ the threatenings of the divine word, and of the wrath to come. Yet, this part of our duty must not be omitted —not neglected. It belongs to the office and work of the holy ministry; and by it, the sinner is to be warned, and left without excuse. I know not of a more fearful passage in all the word of God than the text; and I pray that its awful aspect may truly solemnize our minds. Let us consider,

I. *The Character described.*

"If any man love not." In describing this character, we need not refer to the infidel, the blasphemer, the persecutor, &c. The doom of these is obvious. To be different to these is not enough. We must love Jesus Christ. Christ is not loved,

1. If he dwells not in our hearts.

He says, "My son, give," &c. "Behold, I stand," &c. "Christ in you," &c. Christ is not loved,

2. If we trust not in his mediation.

We only can love Christ when we feel that he has loved us. His love must produce ours. But if we have not come to him, and do not rely on his work, we are in unbelief, and in a state of enmity to him. Christ is not loved,

3. Unless we are obedient to his commands.

"If any man love me he will keep my words." "If ye love me keep my," &c. "Ye are my friends," &c. Christ is not loved,

4. If we do not delight in his ordinances.

Do we hail the day of the Lord with delight? Do we go up with joy to his sanctuary? Do we gladly attend his ordinances? Walk in his statutes? Christ is not loved,

5. If we have not abandoned the world for his sake.

"If any man will be my disciple, let him deny," &c. He says, "Come out from among them." "Ye are not of the world," &c. "If ye love the world," &c. We do not love Christ,

6. If we are not zealous for his glory.

It was this that fixed the woman near the cross. This that caused Paul "to count all things but loss," &c. "God forbid that I," &c. "The love of Christ, &c. Christ said, "Simon, son of Jonas," &c. And then he said, "Feed my sheep." Love will burn for his glory, &c. Lord what wouldst thou have me to do?" Observe, then,

II. *The Threatening denounced.*

The text, we must consider as a predictive threatening. "If any man love not," &c., he will be accursed, when the Lord comes. Here two things are presented to us—

1. He will be accursed, or anathematized.

To be anathematized, signifies to be separated, to be cut off, and delivered to punishment. Now, such as love not Christ, will be separated, or cut off,

(1) From the favorable presence of God. Now, he is gracious, then terrible, now forbearing, then he will be a God of vengeance.

(2) From all the means of grace and hope. No throne of grace; no offer of salvation.

(3) From the company of the redeemed and that forever. Now, they have the sanctuaries, the society, the prayers, &c. of God's people. Then they shall be separated forever and ever.

(4) Now, this curse will be irremediable, and everlasting. Like God, who inflicts it, it will be changeless and eternal.

2. He will be accursed when Christ comes.

Maranatha, the Lord comes—he will come to execute judgment, &c. Jude 14; 2 Thess. i. 6, &c.; Rev. vi. 12. Let us consider,

III. *The grounds on which the infliction of this Threatening may be Justified.*

1. If we appeal to the law of God.

"Thou shalt love the Lord," &c. Now, is the law right and good? if so, the Lord Jesus Christ is our Lord and God. And it is written, "cursed is every one," &c. If exalted dignity, moral glory, and unbounded goodness, have claims, then "If any man," &c. We shall see it right,

2. If we appeal to the gospel.

Here Christ is exhibited as our Saviour Think of what he became—where he came —what he did,—what he suffered, &c. He gave himself for us. Was obedient to death, &c. Now, not to love him is the basest ingratitude. The essence of vileness. It is to crucify Christ afresh

&c. We shall not only see it right, but inevitable,

3. If we appeal to the nature of things.

If we do not love Christ, how can we delight in him, enjoy him, &c. Our desires and feelings cannot centre in him. How sing; how adore; how delight in his presence, &c.

APPLICATION.

1. Mark the universality of the threatening. "If any man," &c. Whoever he may be.

2. How numerous are the motives to love Jesus!

3. If you desire to do so, seek his renewing grace

SKETCHES OF SERMONS

ON TYPES AND METAPHORS

I.—ADAM A TYPE OF CHRIST

"Who is the figure of him that was to come."—*Rom.* v. 14.

THE person, offices, and work of Christ, were not only predicted by the prophets, who all bare witness to him, but a variety of striking types shadowed him forth. Hence Christ is called the truth; that is, the exemplification of what before had been exhibited in figure. The term type, as one observes, signifies the mark or impression made by one thing upon another; but the term is usually employed to denote a prefigurative action or occurrence, in which one event, person, or circumstance, is intended to represent another, similar to it in certain respects, but future and distant.

It must be observed, that none of the personal types could perfectly represent the Saviour, as they were all fallible, sinful men; so that it is necessary, while we pursue the parallel points existing in their history, not to forget the things in which there was an obvious disparity.

The text refers us to Adam, the father of mankind, and says, that "He is the figure of him that was to come."

Let us then, in noticing the typical character of Adam, consider,

I. *The Points of Resemblance between Adam and Christ.*

II. *The Points of Contrast.*

I. *The Points of Resemblance between Adam and Christ.*

1. Both were formed and directly proceeded from God.

All, except our first parents, have been born in the usual mode of generation; and one generation has descended from another. Not so, however, with Adam; his body was moulded and fashioned by God. Jehovah breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, &c. See how this typified the wonderful formation of the nature of Christ. He was conceived of a virgin, by the overshadowing of the Holy Ghost, and was thus immediately formed by the power of God.

2. They resembled each other in the perfection of their nature.

Both were formed in the glorious likeness of God. "He created man," &c. Thus, too, Jesus was holy, undefiled, &c., the express likeness of the Father. "Whoso hath seen me hath seen the Father."

3. They resembled each other in their fatherhood of a numerous race.

Adam was the father of mankind. All have descended from his loins; and all have borne the general features of their first progenitor.

Jesus Christ is called the first-born of many brethren And, by Isaiah, he is

styled, "Everlasting Father," or "the Father of the age to come." All spiritual persons are Christ's seed. Hence the promise, "He shall see his seed," &c., Isai. liii. 10, 11. And all his descendants resemble him. All bear his image. As they bore the image of the earthly, by nature; so, by grace, they bear the image of he heavenly.

4. They resemble each other in the lordship and dominion with which they were invested.

God made Adam but a little lower than the angels, &c., Ps. viii. 5. He gave him a kind of proprietorship over all earthly things. Now Jesus is fully invested with authority and power over all things. "The Father loveth the Son," &c., Heb. i. 2, 4. Eph. i. 20–23, "And set him at his own right hand," &c.

5. They resembled each other in the conjugal union appointed by God.

God cast Adam into a deep sleep, and took from his side woman, who was thus found a help-meet and companion for him. Now the union of the husband and wife is one of the most striking types of Christ's union with the church. He is the bridegroom, and the church is the bride, the Lamb's wife. See Eph. v. 25–32. Now the sleep of Adam seems to exhibit in a striking typical manner how Christ obtained the bride—the church. It behooved him to sleep the sleep of death. His side had to be opened; his heart pierced. "Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it," Eph. v. 25.

Such, then, are some of the more striking points of resemblance between Adam and Christ.

II. *The Points of Contrast.*

1. The first Adam was earthly, the second Adam is heavenly.

He came from heaven, was in heaven, and ascended to heaven.

2. The first Adam effaced the divine image from his mind, and polluted human nature; the second Adam was the express image of God, and came to restore our nature to purity and glory.

3. The spirit of apostatizing Adam was proud, unbelieving, discontented, and rebellious; the spirit of the second Adam was humble, submissive, obedient, and faithful.

4. The first Adam brought sin and death upon his species; the second Adam brought salvation and life.

5. By the first Adam paradise was lost by the second Adam paradise was regained.

In the paradise lost, we were deprived of the pleasures of earth; but in the one regained, we obtain the felicities of heaven.

6. By the first Adam all men were brought beneath the curse; by the second Adam's death, redemption from that curse has been procured for every man, Rom. v. 15, 16.

APPLICATION.

1. Learn our natural connection with the first Adam. We are all his posterity. Have all his fallen nature. Heirs to all pains and miseries his fall produced.

2. We have all imitated Adam's sin. He proudly aspired after that which was beyond his reach. He desired what was prohibited. He disobeyed God. Which of us has not done the same? "We have all gone astray," &c.

3. See then the importance of an interes in the second Adam. Here is our help. "O Israel, thou hast destroyed," &c. We must be of the nature of the second Adam We must be co-heirs with him. We shall then have a sure and certain hope of a resurrection with the just, and the enjoyment of eternal life.

II.—NOAH A TYPE OF CHRIST.

"Noah—a preacher of righteousness."—2 *Pet.* ii. 5.

Few lives have had so many incidents of a striking nature crowded into them as that of Noah. He lived at a very interesting crisis, and had to do with events of the most solemn and important character. His personal history is repeatedly brought forward to command the imitation of the servants of God, and as a model of sterling, although not infallible rectitude. In considering his eventful history as typifying that of the Saviour, most of the prominent traits and occurrences of his life will necessarily be brought before us. Noah seems to have been a type of the Redeemer,

I. *In his Name.*

Noah signifies comfort or rest; and of him it was prophetically said, "This same shall comfort us concerning our work and toil of our hands," &c., Gen v. 29

Now Jesus is emphatically the "consolation of Israel," and the rest of a heavyladen and guilty world. He imparts spiritual rest to the weary soul. The believer rests on him as the only foundation of hope; and he has provided, and it is his prerogative to admit to that heavenly rest, which remains for the people of God.

II. *In his Holy Life.*

"Noah was a just man and perfect in his generation, and Noah walked with God." Gen. vi. 9. What a testimony does God give in this verse of the excellency of Noah; "just, perfect, and walking with God." Yet how much more fully were these features observable in Jesus. He was the "*Just One.*" His nature was immaculate,—without spot, or sinful infirmity. He lived in closest fellowship with God. Ever walked before him in all well-pleasing. His whole life reflected the purity of the Father, and, in all things and every moment, God approved, and loved, and delighted in him.

III. *In his Public Ministrations.*

Noah was a "preacher of righteousness." No doubt it was by the truth which Noah delivered, that the Spirit strove with the wicked and infatuated antediluvian world. We have every reason to believe that in discharging this office, he was faithful, self-denying, earnest, and persevering. How fully did this office point out the ministrations of the Son of God. Jesus was appointed to preach the gospel of righteousness to the poor. To this he devotedly attended, and faithfully did he persevere in publishing the righteous doctrines and precepts of his heavenly kingdom. His preaching was eminently spiritual, yet clear, plain, and often clothed in the language of figure and parable, so that the common people heard him gladly. It is remarkable, too, that, as preachers, both prophesied of the just vengeance of God. Noah with respect to the old world, Jesus with respect to Jerusalem and Judea.

IV. *As the Deliverer of his Family.*

God directed him to prepare an ark for the saving of himself and house; and he obeyed God, built the ark, and thus saved himself and family from the destructive flood. Jesus expressly came to save his people from their sins, and thus to deliver them from the wrath to come. The ark, in this sense, seems strikingly to represent the church of Christ.

(1) Thus, as in the ark the family of Noah were together, and separated from an ungodly world, so believers are redeemed out of the world, and are united together under their one head, Jesus Christ.

(2) As the ark was of divine construction, so the church is the workmanship of Christ, fashioned in all things after his own infinite wisdom and skill.

(3) As the ark was the instrument of safety, so we are brought into the church out of the condemnation under which the whole world lieth.

(4) As those in the ark escaped the vengeance of God, and became the inhabitants of the new world; so all believers, united together in the church of Christ, are heirs of God and of the kingdom of eternal life.

V. *As the Priest of the World.*

Noah evidently acted as such, and his offerings were clearly typical of that which Christ has presented for the guilt of the world. See Gen. viii. 20, 21. The sacrifice which Noah presented consisted of clean beasts, and also of every clean fowl, a sacrifice which was peculiarly acceptable to God, and through which he expressed his gracious regards to the future generations of mankind. Jesus offered the perfect sacrifice of himself, for all the nations and families of the earth, a sacrifice which made atonement for the transgressions of man, and through which God has expressed his favor and mercy to all who sincerely repent and believe the gospel of his Son.

Such are the leading points of typical resemblance between Noah and Jesus. Many instances of *disparity* will be obvious to the contemplative mind.

(1) Noah was only perfect in his generation, contrasted with those around him; he had the infirmities pertaining to sinful nature, and after his deliverance fell into temptation, and became inebriated with the fermented juice of the grape. Jesus was sinless, absolutely holy, and guile was not found in his mouth.

(2) The ark which Noah built was for the temporal deliverance of a few persons. Christ's salvation is spiritual and eternal and will embrace, of all nations and tongues, a multitude which no man can number.

APPLICATION

1. Sinners who reject the message of

life by Christ Jesus, must be involved in endless and irremediable ruin.

2. The guilt of such is exceedingly aggravated, above those who perished in the time of Noah.

3. Let all men listen to the gracious overtures of mercy as made known in the gospel.

4. All who believe and enter into the ark shall be saved.

5. There is ample room in the ark, and a free invitation to every sinner.

6. Be wise, and enter in, and be saved.

III.—MELCHISEDEC A TYPE OF CHRIST.

"After the order of Melchisedec."—*Heb.* vii. 11.

It is impossible to conceive of a more clear and manifest type of Jesus than Melchisedec. As such he was spoken of by the psalmist in one of his most direct and beautiful prophecies of the Messiah, Ps. cx. 4. The apostle quotes the language of that prediction, and applies it directly to the Saviour; and the chief part of this chapter serves to illustrate the corresponding traits of resemblance between Melchisedec and Christ. The chief features of similitude obviously centre in the character of their priestly office, but there are other particulars not unworthy of our consideration:—Melchisedec typified the Saviour,

I. *In the Mysteriousness of his Personal History.*

This mystery particularly refers to his descent being unrevealed. We have no account of his father or mother; we know nothing of his stock or ancestry: he appears in his own striking character, standing forth alone in the pages of revealed truth. Now that which is unrevealed of Melchisedec, (for doubtless he had both father and mother,) literally applies to Jesus.

(1) As divine.

He had no father or mother, no beginning of years, and will have no end of life. Thus he is self-existent, immutable, and eternal; the wise and blessed God, who hath unchangeableness and immortality dwelling in himself.

(2) As human.

He had no father; he was conceived of the Virgin by the Holy Ghost. As it was written, "A virgin shall conceive," &c.

II. *In the Offices which he sustained.*

He was "King of Salem and Priest of the most high God." See Heb. vii. 2. In these how strikingly he represented Jesus the Messiah, who is eminently styled,

1. Prince of peace and righteous governor.

The holy, the just one. Whose reign is a righteous administration; whose sceptre is eminently mild, pacific, and merciful.

It is impossible to conceive of one who so fully bears out these distinguished features in his person and government as Jesus. The righteous ruler; the prince of peace. See Ps. xlv. 1; Isaiah xxxii. 1, Jer. xxiii. 5; Zech. ix. 9; Rev. vii. 14.

2. He is, too, the priest of the most high God.

God's especially anointed and holy one. The priest of his universal church. Whose sacrifice is the richest and most precious ever offered on the altar of the Lord. A priest, whose office, work, and glory, were but dimly prefigured by those who served at the Jewish altar. A priest, in whom Jehovah's approbation centred, and whose incense ever came up so as to secure his highest delights.

3. Both the regal and priestly offices were united in him.

These offices were generally separate. Uzziah incurred God's displeasure for presuming to enter on the work of the priesthood. See 2 Chron. xxvi. 18. But of Jesus it was distinctly predicted that he should be "a priest upon his throne," Zech. vi. 13. And as the sacrifice of his body was suspended upon the cross, a true inscription represented his regal glory,—"Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews." As king and priest he now dwells in the most holy place. There he has his heavenly throne. There he wears his royal diadem. There he sways his righteous sceptre. But there, too, he has on his sacerdotal vestments, and touched with the feeling of his people's infirmities, he ever liveth to make intercession for them. Like Melchisedec,

4. He had no predecessor or successor in the offices he held.

No monarch left for Jesus a throne or kingdom. And as to his priesthood, he

was not of Aaron's line, nor of the tribe of Levi. In both capacities he stood forth in his own divine right, to govern and to atone. To reign over men, and to redeem them to God by his own infinitely precious blood. He will never transfer either the crown or the mitre. None will ever succeed him, as prince of righteousness, or priest of the most high God. His sacrifice once offered, possessing boundless virtue, avails forever in behalf of all who believe. And his throne abideth forever and ever. Melchisedec was a type of Jesus,

III. *In the Blessing he bestowed.*

Now mark here,

1. The person blessed.

Abraham, the father of the faithful. The rich blessings of Jesus are confined to believers, those who are the spiritual seed of that godly patriarch.

2. The ceremonial medium of the blessing.

"He brought forth bread and wine." How strikingly significant of that sacred medium through which Jesus blesses his people. The very symbols of his body and blood. Those symbols he chose to perpetuate the remembrance of his death in the ordinance of the supper. All our blessings come to us through the body which bare our guilt, and through the blood which was offered for our sins.

3. The blessing itself.

It was the "blessing of the most high God," Gen. xiv. 19. Now that of which Jesus is the medium, and which he bestows, is the favor and love of God. The smile of God. The peace of God With which every good in time and in eternity is connected. Which include present happiness and eternal life. Melchisedec was a type of Christ,

IV. *In the Homage and Tribute he received.*

Abraham greatly honored Melchisedec, and gave him tithes of all. How much more ought every believer to honor Jesus, and cheerfully consecrate to him their hearts, lives, influence, and their all. To him we belong; we are not our own but his. He has bought us, redeemed us to himself, so that if we live, we are solemnly obligated to live to him; or if we die, to die to him: so that living or dying, we are ever the Lord's.

APPLICATION.

1. Learn the true dignity of the Saviour, both in his kingly and priestly offices.

2. Both these he sustains for our welfare. He died to bless us; and now he reigns and lives to bless us

3. The affectionate and supreme homage which we should render

IV.—ISAAC A TYPE OF CHRIST

"And Abraham called the name of his son that was born unto him, whom Sarah bare unto him, Isaac."—*Gen.* xxi. 3.

THE piety and faith of Abraham in surrendering his beloved son, at the demand of Jehovah, has ever been held up as an extraordinary act of love and devotedness to God. In scripture the event stands forth as one of peculiar interest; and we are not only to admire the patriarch, but to imitate his self-denial and resignation; and to follow him, as one who now through faith and patience inherits the promises. But I fear in contemplating the subject we forget that the piety and faith and resignation of Isaac could not be greatly inferior to that of his father, for Isaac might have rebelled and refused to have submitted to a death so apparently unnatural and cruel, for at this time he was twenty-five if not thirty years of age. But at present let us glance briefly at the leading points of resemblance between Isaac and Jesus.

We see it,

I. *In the Appropriateness of his Name.*

Isaac signifies "laughter" or "rejoicing." Jesus, as the Messiah, was to be the consolation of Israel. As the Redeemer, the joy of the whole earth. No name so full of gladness to a disconsolate world as that of Christ's:

"'Tis music in the sinner's ears,
'Tis life and health and peace."

II. *In the peculiar Circumstances of his Birth.*

(1) His birth was specially predicted. God had communicated this both to Abraham and Sarah, Gen. xvii. 16, and xviii. 13 To the birth and coming of Jesus most of the prophets bore witness. Every event connected therewith had long been written on the roll of prophecy by the finger of God. (2) His birth was extraordinary When his mother was past age, Heb. xi. 11. The birth of Jesus was still more extraordinary. Born of a virgin. According to the prediction of Isaiah, vii 14

Luke i. 34. (3) His birth was connected with great joy, Gen. xxi. Still greater rejoicing was associated with the birth of Christ. A host of angels descended to celebrate it in songs of rapturous joy. "And suddenly here was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host," &c. Luke ii. 3, 14.

III. *In being intentionally offered as a Sacrifice.*

Observe,

1. The description of the sacrifice which was given,

"Thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest." How naturally our thoughts are led by this language to Jesus, the only-begotten son of God, the son of his delight, his dearly beloved son.

2. He was to be presented as a sacrifice.

"Offer him there for a burnt-offering," Gen. xxii. 1, 2, &c. Here again we are directly led to Jesus. He came to be a sacrifice. The apostle says of him, "For by one offering," &c., Heb. x. 14, evidently referring to the death of Jesus.

3. He was to be devoted and sacrificed by his father.

To Abraham God said, "Take now thy son," &c. Jesus was God's gift to the world. He so loved the world, that "*he gave*," &c., "He spared not his own son," &c., Rom. viii. 32. The prophet Zechariah presents this before us in a form peculiarly striking, when Jehovah speaks, "Awake, O sword, against my shepherd," &c., Zech. xiii. 7. See also Acts iii. 18.

4. He was to be offered on mount Moriah.

To this spot with his father he travelled for three days, &c. Near the same spot, —on Calvary, Jesus was sacrificed for the sin of the world.

5. Isaac bare the wood, which was designed to burn the offering.

Christ also bare the cross on which he was to be crucified.

6. Isaac freely submitted to be bound and tied upon the altar.

Jesus voluntarily went forth to death, and freely surrendered his spirit into the hands of his Father. But here the typical resemblance terminates. For Isaac a substitute is provided. The uplifted hand is stayed: God orders a ram to be bound and slain by Abraham in the stead of his son, Gen. xxii. 13. For Jesus there was no substitute. It behooved him to suffer. He was sent and appointed of his Father to his end. He was born and lived that he might give himself a sacrifice for the sin of the world.

In the return of Isaac to his father's house, we have shadowed forth the resurrection of Christ from the dead, and his ascension to heaven, where he now appears at the right hand of the majesty on high.

APPLICATION.

1. Let the subject lead us to contemplate the true desert of sin—which is death. And to this death as sinners all men are exposed.

2. Consider the necessity of an atoning sacrifice, "Without shedding of blood," &c.

3. Consider the infinite merit and preciousness of that sacrifice which God has provided,—his own son. The precious blood of Christ.

4. The necessity of a believing personal interest in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

5. The awful consequence of neglecting the propitiation the love of God has provided—eternal death.

V.—RESEMBLANCE BETWEEN JOSEPH AND CHRIST.

"And the patriarchs, moved with envy, sold Joseph into Egypt, but God was with him."—*Act.* vii. 9.

All kinds of readers are charmed with the history of Joseph. So full of incident we do not wonder at young persons feeling deeply interested in the striking details of holy writ. So evidently distinguished by the finger of divine providence, the pious and contemplative must adore the wisdom and goodness of God, which overruled every event for the furtherance of his own designs, the glory of his name, and the ultimate advancement and happiness of Joseph. The piety of Joseph was striking and exemplary, and runs, like a golden thread, through the entire narrative of his life. But the very peculiar coincidence in many of the events of his history, and similar events in the life of Jesus, has led many to consider him as an eminent type of the Saviour. Without either affirming or denying this, it cannot fail to edify our minds, while tracing the very numerous

tatures of resemblance which exist between them. Observe this,

I. *In the Significance of Joseph's Name.*

It signifies especially, *increase*, or fruitfulness. As such it seemed to point out the ultimate prosperity with which God would bless him. Of Jesus it was predicted, by the prophet Isaiah, that "of the increase of his government and peace there should be no end," ch. ix. 7. John, the harbinger of Messiah, said of him, "He must increase," &c. His name is to endure longer than the sun; all men are to be blessed in him, and call him blessed. His progeny is to outnumber the stars of heaven, and the sands on the seashore. The resemblance is observable,

II. *In his Father's pre-eminent Affection.*

Joseph was the first-born of the beloved Rachel. And it is said, "Israel loved Joseph more than all his children," Gen. xxxvii. 3. We do not vindicate the evidence which Jacob gave of this, allowing the feeling to be right. But we turn to Jesus and his heavenly Father. He is God's only-begotten Son. The first-born. The Son of the Highest. And on him all the heart's affections of the Father were fixed. He was his chosen. God's soul ever delighted in him, and he proclaimed from the excellent glory, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased," Matt. iii. 17 "The Father hath loved the Son, and hath given all things into his hand," John iii. 35.

III. *In the Trials and Sufferings which he endured and the Advancement which followed.*

1. Joseph was the subject of his brethren's envy and dislike.

So Jesus came to his own, but they hated him, and received him not. From envy did they persecute and malign him.

2. While Joseph was on a mission of kindness to them, they conspired against him.

The Jews, the kinsmen of Jesus, after the flesh, also conspired against him, and took counsel to put him to death.

3. Joseph was sold by his brethren for twenty pieces of silver.

So Jesus was delivered for thirty pieces into the hands of his enemies.

4. Joseph was falsely accused and cast into prison.

So was Jesus arraigned, and many false accusations were brought against him. As a prisoner, too, he was scourged and delivered up to his accusers.

5. The predictions of Joseph in his abasement respecting the chief butler and baker, seem to coincide with the declaration of mercy which Jesus made to the dying thief, of an entrance into paradise, while we fear the other perished in hardness and unbelief.

6. The deliverance of Joseph somewhat resembles the resurrection of Christ from the dead, and the rolling away of the stone from the mouth of the sepulchre where he had been laid.

7. The advancement of Joseph to honor, and riches, and dominion, beautifully sets forth the glorious exaltation of Christ to the right hand of his Father, who hath committed all judgment and authority into his hands.

8. Joseph provided the bread of life for those who would otherwise have perished

So Jesus has provided the bread of everlasting life for a dying world.

9. Joseph mercifully forgave his brethren, and dealt bountifully with them.

So Jesus prayed for his murderers, and gave the first offer of salvation to the guilty sinners of Jerusalem.

10. Joseph provided a dwelling for his kindred in the rich and fruitful Goshen.

So Jesus has prepared for all his followers everlasting mansions in the kingdom of his glory.

11. Joseph exercised power and authority over all the people.

So Jesus has unlimited power and universal authority, for the Father hath given all things into his hands.

12. God overruled all events, even the malice and wickedness of his brethren, for his final good and exaltation.

So all the affairs of earth and time are under divine control, for the final and universal establishment of Christ's kingdom and glory, until the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdom of Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever. Such are the chief points of resemblance between Joseph and Jesus.

APPLICATION.

1. Let the interesting narratives connected with the history of Joseph only serve to incite us to peruse more intently the all-important history of Jesus the Son of God

2. While we honor and admire the stern integrity and sincere piety of Joseph, we are called upon to imitate and walk in the footsteps of Jesus.

3. Joseph conferred temporal benefits upon the people and upon his kindred; Jesus hath obtained eterna redemption for all who obey him. He gives the bread of life, the mercies of salvation, and everlasting glory to all who love him.

4. Joseph endured many sufferings, but now feeble were they when contrasted with the agony and death of the Son of God; and let it not be forgotten, while Joseph suffered on his own account, Jesus suffered expressly and voluntarily for us, and for our salvation, that he might bring us to the enjoyment of the favor, image, and glory of God.

VI.—MOSES A TYPE OF CHRIST

"A prophet—like unto me."—*Deut.* xviii. 15.

No other person so fully and clearly typified Christ as Moses. His life was crowded with events which evidently shadowed forth the long-predicted and expected Messiah. In addition to these prominent events, God expressly commanded him to inform the people, that he would raise up for them a prophet *like* unto himself, one who should have Jehovah's words in his mouth,—who should speak all his words unto the people, and whose commands all the people should be solemly required to hearken and obey. Let us notice then the great leading incidents in the history of Moses, which seemed to typify the character and work of the Redeemer. Notice,

I. *The peculiar Circumstances connected with their Birth.*

A cruel edict was in force when Moses was born, for the extermination of the male children of the Israelites, Ex. i. 16. A similar edict was issued by Herod, at the birth of Jesus, when the children of Bethlehem and the coasts thereof were slain, Matt. ii. 16. Moses was mercifully delivered by the providence of God; in like manner Jesus was saved by the direct interposition of heaven, Matt. ii. 13. Thus, as the life of Moses was preserved from the cruel designs of Pharaoh, was the life of the Saviour delivered from the murderous hand of Herod. Notice,

II. *Their voluntary Abasement and Humiliation.*

Moses, a resident in the palace of Pharaoh, surrounded with the honors, and riches, and pleasures of Egypt, when he was come to years freely surrendered them all, and chose rather to be the companion of the suffering people of God. Jesus, the prince of heaven, possessed of all the honors and riches of glory, for our well-being and salvation, cheerfully condescended to assume our nature and condition, to tabernacle in our world, to become a servant ministering to all, that we, through his humiliation and poverty, might be made rich, and obtain exalted honors and eternal life. Observe,

III. *Both were especially appointed to be the Deliverers of the Afflicted and the Oppressed.*

Moses was sent to deliver the groaning Israelites from the bondage of Pharaoh and the slavery of Egypt. Jesus came to deliver the world from the bondage of sin and the slavery of the devil. Moses was sent by God, expressly commissioned and fully qualified by miraculous power for the accomplishment of this great work. Jesus was also sent immediately from the Father to deliver the world from the power of Satan, and to save immortal souls from the destroying vassalage of sin. For this he was anointed with the Holy Ghost, and possessed all strength, so that all things were subjected to the word of his power. No one ever performed the mighty works which were done by Jesus. See Peter's reference to Christ's miraculous deeds, Acts ii. 22.

IV. *Both of them delivered the Laws and Mind of God to the People.*

On Sinai Moses received from God the moral law, and made it known to the Israelites. Jesus delivered the spiritual exposition of the law in his sermon on the mount. See Matt. v., vi., and vii. This one great office Christ sustained to make known unto men all the will of his Father, to bring life and immortality to light by his gospel, and to give a perfect code of laws to mankind.

V. *Both of them were appointed Leaders of the People.*

Moses stood at the head of the old dispensation, and having given God's law to Israel, he conducted them through the desert towards the land of promise. Jesus

was given as a witness and leader to the people. He came as the head of the new dispensation to conduct the numerous host of believing followers to immortal glory.

VI. *Both of them acted as Mediators between God and the People.*

Moses stood forth between the people and God, when his avenging wrath would otherwise have destroyed them. For their safety he faithfully, perseveringly, and successfully interceded. In this he but faintly exhibited the mediatorial office and work of Jesus. Jesus engaged himself as the surety of ungodly, condemned sinners; he freely sought to bear their sins, and be wounded for their transgressions; and by the virtue of his atoning blood he honorably turned aside the just wrath of God, and delivered a guilty world from condemnation and eternal death. If Moses pleaded for his ungrateful and guilty countrymen, Jesus with his dying breath pleaded on behalf of his murderers, and said, "Father, forgive them, they know not what they do."

VII. *Both of their Engagements were connected with the Ministrations of Angels.*

The law was ordained by angels in the hand of Moses, as mediator. See Acts vii. 53; Ex. xxiii. 20, &c. The whole life of Jesus was associated with the ministry of angels. They announced his conception, proclaimed his birth, succored him in the desert, witnessed his transfiguration, strengthened him in the garden, watched over his sepulchre, rolled away the stone at his resurrection, and were as his attendants, when he ascended to glory.

VIII. *Both were distinguished for high moral Endowments.*

Moses was the obedient, faithful servant of God. He was eminently holy, the meekest of all men. He held intimate fellowship with God. Fasted forty days and forty nights. His countenance was irradiated with the beams of the divine glory. And God greatly distinguished and honored him before the people. Jesus was obedient and faithful as a son. He was spotless, guile was not in his mouth. He did no sin He was gentle and meek; he strove not, neither did he cry, or lift up his voice in the street. The law of love was in his heart. Kindness and benignity in his conversation. He exhibited great self-denial, and fasted, too, forty days and nights in the wilderness. He held the most intimate and unbroken fellowship with God. At his transfiguration his countenance shone as the sun, and his garments appeared to be of glittering brightness, and God, on several occasions, declared him to be the Son of his delight, in whom he was well pleased.

IX. *Both were eminent Prophets of the Most High God.*

As a prophet God spake to Moses more directly than to other prophets, "face to face." He prophesied largely, and his predictions, although extending probably to the end of the world, were full, comprehensive, and clear. See many parts of the book of Deuteronomy. Jesus possessed the spirit of prophecy without measure. At all times he had access to his heavenly Father, knew all his mind, and on any occasion could reveal his will to the people. Like Moses, his prophecies included the displeasure of God, towards the impenitent seed of Abraham, and his predictions had respect to succeeding events from the time of his first advent to his second coming, in majesty, power, and glory, to judge the world.

X. *Both obtained unspeakably valuable Blessings for the People.*

Not only did Moses lead Israel from the galling yoke of Pharaoh, but when in the desert he obtained for them "manna from heaven," water from the flinty rock, and turned aside from them fearful plagues. See Ex. xxxii. 30; Numb. xvi. 46. Jesus Christ in the days of his flesh went about doing good, healing their infirmities, delivering those who were bound and tormented of the devil. He also fed multitudes in the desert, and gave himself as the true bread of life to a dying world.

XI. *Both lived and labored for the Well-being of others.*

Moses displayed the most astonishing benevolence for his countrymen. He ever sought their happiness, and exhibited the greatest kindness and patience towards them: rather than they should perish, he besought the Lord that his name might be blotted out of God's book. In this how vastly the antitype exceeds the type. Jesus exhibited inexpressible goodness to his ancient people. He embodied his immeasurable love in all his conduct towards them. And he actually became a curse for sinners, that they, through his death might obtain everlasting life.

XII. *Both were treated with Ingratitude*

by those whose Welfare they lived to promote.

How often did the Israelites rebel against him, and would have thrown off his authority; they frequently murmured against him, and with the greatest ingratitude did they often attribute their own miseries to him, instead of confessing and forsaking their iniquities. Thus too was Jesus treated by the Jews; he came unto his own, but his own received him not. They even preferred a murderer to him, and by wicked hands did they put him to a cruel and shameful death.

APPLICATION.

1. Justly distinguished as Moses was, he was yet frail, a man of like infirmities with others; as such he offended God, by speaking rashly with his lips. Jesus was immaculate. All holiness dwelt in him.

2. Moses was but a servant; Jesus was the Son of God.

3. Moses was the head of that dispensation which was legal and ceremonial, and which passed away. Jesus is the head of that ceremony which is spiritual, gracious, and abiding. To the supreme excellency and glory of Jesus did Moses and the prophets bear witness.

4. Let us rejoice that we are not come to Sinai, but Zion; not under the law, but under grace; not the followers of Moses, but the disciples of Christ.

5. If disobedience to Moses and his law was visited with God's displeasure, how shall those escape who neglect Christ's salvation, and obey not his gospel.

VII.—JOSHUA A TYPE OF CHRIST.

"The Lord spake unto Joshua, the son of Nun." &c.—*Josh.* i. 1–5. See *Heb.* iv. 8.

THE life and history of the most celebrated individual could not fully and perfectly typify the life and work of the Son of God. In several things Moses could not represent the coming Messiah. His sin against the Lord, and his exclusion from the goodly land, especially illustrate this idea. The great designs of God respecting his people were not perfected by Moses. Joshua had to take up and complete those designs, after Moses had died in the mountain of the Lord. Joshua appears, in many respects, to have been an illustrious type of the Saviour Notice the typical character of Joshua,

I. *In his Name.*

Joshua signifies precisely in Hebrew what Jesus does in the Greek tongue, viz. SAVIOUR. See Heb. iv. 8. Both names were appropriate to the work in which they engaged, and the achievements which they obtained. In this only, as saviours, did they differ, that while Joshua had to do with the temporal salvation of the hundreds of thousands of the Israelites, Jesus came to save unnumbered hosts of believers from spiritual and eternal death.

II. *As the Successor of Moses.*

Moses gave the law to the people, but did not put them in possession of the promised rest. For this he must have Joshua as his successor. So it was with respect to the legal dispensation, could not give rest to the weary and heavy laden sinner; but our spiritual Joshua came expressly to do that which the law could not do, and to give that to transgressors which the law could not give. As such, the law, with its requirements and its threatenings to the guilty, came by Moses; but grace that is, favor to condemned sinners, came by Jesus Christ. Moses showed the people what they owed to Jehovah, Joshua exhibited what the goodness of God had provided even for the unworthy.

III. *As the Commander and Leader of the People.*

As such he was required to make known unto the people all the words of God's law, and to exemplify perfect obedience thereunto in his own person and life. He was also to lead them in their marches, and conduct them onwards to the land of promise. How strikingly did Joshua thus typify Jesus! He was appointed to be God's witness and a leader to the people, Isa. lv. 4. All the law of God did he exhibit in his holy and spotless life. He was righteousness, living and speaking to the world, the ten commandments, in all their spiritual meaning, alive. He announced himself as the way, the truth, and the life, and engaged to conduct all who followed him to a glorious immortality and eternal life. "For it became him, by whom are all things," &c., Heb. ii. 10.

IV. *In the astonishing Events of his Life*

1. There was the miracle at Jordan.

The waters of Jordan were divided before him, and the people passed through

as on dry ground. In the same river the glories of Jesus were witnessed by the people. It was there that he began his ministry, by being baptized of John, while the heavens were opened, and the voice from the excellent glory pronounced him to be the Son of God's delight, in whom he was well pleased. In this ordinance, too, is it not where men, having forsaken the world, profess their faith in Christ and their love to his name, and by which they become the partakers of that spiritual rest which all who believe experimentally possess? See Rom. vi. 4; Col. ii. 12.

2. He threw down the walls of Jericho, ch. vi. 5.

And that by an instrumentality apparently powerless and insignificant. How indicative of that subjugation of the world to the authority of Christ, by the preaching of his cross. Yet, as in the one case, the walls fell down at the sound of the rams' horns, so in the other, by the publication of the gospel, the strongholds of sin have been beaten down, and by this simple and, to the wise men of the world, foolish agency, shall all the kingdoms of the world ultimately bow down before the sceptre of Jesus, call him blessed, and be blessed in him, 1 Cor. i. 18–28.

3. He subdued all their enemies.

Faithful to all which God had spoken to him, the divine help made him at all times victorious, and placed his feet on the necks of his enemies. In this we again turn to contemplate the Captain of our salvation, who came to encounter all the deadly foes of mankind, and who, by his life and sufferings, by his miracles and death, by his conflicts and resurrection, triumphed over all the powers of darkness, bruised the head of the old serpent, and effectually destroyed the works of the devil, Col. ii. 13, 14; Rev. i. 18.

4. He gave the people possession of the goodly land. See ch. xiv. 1.

Thus Jesus, having overcome all our enemies, and accomplished all the Father had given him to do, ascended on high, and took possession of the heavenly Canaan, on behalf and in the name of his people. He said, "In my Father's house are many mansions," &c., John xiv. 1, "I ascend to my Father and to your Father," John xx. 17, &c.; Rev. iii. 21 Such are the leading traits of resemblance between Joshua and Jesus. In the one case, Joshua was the leader of one nation, in the other, Jesus is the captain and conductor of countless hosts of every nation, and people, and tongue. The achievements of Joshua were temporal, and the land he obtained was but an earthly, temporary possession. The achievements of Jesus were spiritual, and the inheritance he bestows is heavenly, and passeth not away. Happy the hosts who had Joshua for their leader, and Canaan for their inheritance, but unspeakably more happy the followers of Jesus, and the expectants of that kingdom which shall not pass away.

VIII.—SAMSON A TYPE OF CHRIST

"And the angel of the Lord appeared unto the woman, and said unto her, Behold now, thou art barren and bearest not; but thou shalt conceive and bear a son," &c.—*Judges* xiii. 3–5.

Few persons of scriptural renown appear to less advantage than Samson. There are no evidences of superior piety or distinguished goodness exhibited in his life, and we might almost have hesitated whether to place him among the ranks of the godly, had we not found this already done by the apostle, who gives us a brief view of Old Testament worthies, in his epistle to the Hebrews, (ch. xi. 32,) and concludes by saying, "All these died in the faith." While the private life of Samson is however so lamentably deficient as to traits of elevated piety, yet the public events of his wonderful career seem expressly typical of the person and work of the Messiah Observe this in the following particulars:

I. *In the Events associated with his Birth.*

His conception was announced by an angel, and his future character and history predicted, Judges xiii. 5. How exactly do we see a similar messenger, announcing a similar event to the virgin mother of Jesus. "And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary; for thou hast found favor with God. And behold thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a Son, and shalt call his name Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest, and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David," &c., Luke i 30–33. He seemed to be a type of Christ,

II. *As a Nazarite.*

It was ordained of him that he should be

a Nazarite from the womb. The Nazarites were considered separated from common purposes, and devoted to God. In this how did he typify Jesus, who although not a *legal* Nazarite, yet was called a Nazarene, Matt. ii. 23. And who exhibited in all his actions his devotedness to his Father's work, and who was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners. Yes, how truly was the very spirit of the Nazarite exemplified in Christ. He associated not with those engaged in the pursuit of wealth, fame, or earthly glory. His was not companionship with the great and the learned, with the nobles and princes of this world. He came to do the work of God, and he wearied not, until he could say, Father, "I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do."

III. *In his Achievements*

1. In the destruction of the lion.

The history of this event is given, Judg. xiv. 6, and the sequel of the bees and honey in the carcass is peculiarly singular; as Scott justly observes, "the carcass of a lion was a most unlike place for a swarm of bees, being, as might have been supposed, both inconvenient and offensive to that delicate insect, which draws honey from the most odoriferous flowers and plants." In this we see the temptations and victory of Christ singularly exhibited. Christ, on his entrance on the great work of his mission, retired into the wilderness, and there conflicted and overcame Satan, the roaring lion. And this conquest of Christ's is full of sweetness to the tempted believer, for he not only sees the limited power of the wicked one, but also learns how effectually to put him to flight by the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. See Matt. iv. 1–11.

2. He marvellously discomfited his enemies.

Unto these enemies he was delivered by his own people, Judg. xv. 11, &c. Yet by his own mighty arm, nerved with power from on high, did he overcome them. See Judg. xv. 14–20. And so also at his death did he slay still more of his enemies than during his life, Judg. xvi. 26. The whole life of Jesus was one struggle with those who were the enemies of his person, doctrine, and reign. By his words and miracles did he confound both the Pharisees and scribes and teachers of the people. But at his death he gained a final conquest over earth and hell, and triumphantly shouted, "It is finished," and gave up the ghost In the sufferings and indignities offered to Samson before his death, we have shadowed forth the shame, and contumely, and cruelty with which Jesus was treated in the court of Herod, and after the sentence of death was pronounced upon him. Compare especially Judg. xvi. 25, and Matt xxvii. 29.

3. In bearing away the gates of Gaza.

See Judges xv. 2, 3. It is impossible to read the scripture account of this event and not see a striking coincidence in it, and the resurrection of Christ from the dead.

Just as the enemies of Gaza must have marvelled at Samson's escape, bearing on his shoulders the ponderous gates of the city, so marvelled both the soldiers and the Jews at the resurrection of Christ from the tomb, with the earthquake and glory with which it was attended. We shall not attempt to show the great disparity between Samson and Jesus, as one was the least perfect of Old Testament saints, and the other the source and pattern of unsullied purity and goodness. It may indeed be said that many New Testament saints, under a more favorable dispensation, exhibit equal frailties to those displayed in the life of Samson. Our reply is, Jesus is the model of Christian excellency, we are called with a high and holy calling, and it behooves us to show forth a conversation becoming the gospel of Christ. While Samson acts as a beacon, let Jesus be the magnet, directing us to walk in his holy and heavenly steps.

IX.—DAVID A TYPE OF CHRIST.

"They shall serve the Lord their God, and David their king, whom I will raise up unto them."—*Jer.* xxx. 9.

No one ever more fully typified Jesus than David, who, notwithstanding his lamentable defects of character, was an eminently holy man, and an illustrious servant of the God of Israel. His history is exceedingly eventful, and highly adapted to instruct and edify the contemplative believer. Few were more visibly under the guidance of a benign and wise providence than David. God indeed was his refuge, his help, and his shield. He stands forth

justly celebrated as a wise and good monarch; his ardent devout piety, the prophetic sphere in which he moved, and his sanctified poetic powers, rendered him an eminent blessing in his day and generation. His psalms have comforted and strengthened the people of God in every age, and his songs of praise will be joyfully sung in the assemblies of the righteous to the end of the world. But at present we have to do with David as a type of the Saviour. This typical resemblance is observable,

I. *In his Name.*

David signifies beloved. Such was David, beloved of God, a man after God's own heart. We see in the text that the very name is given to Jesus, for the prophecies of Jeremiah could have respect to none but to the Messiah. See also Ezek. xxxiv. 24; Hos. iii. 5. If David's name appropriately belonged to him in its signification of beloved, how much does it apply to Jesus. He is essentially and in the most comprehensive sense the BELOVED. Beloved of God, Jehovah's everlasting delight. (See Prov. viii. 30.) Beloved and adored of angels. The joy of heaven and the one supreme object of celestial worship and praise. Beloved of the church, in every age and country, and among every nation and people, where the gospel has been preached, and his sweet odoriferous name made known. This is our beloved, and this is our friend.

II. *In his Parentage and Birth-place.*

Jesse, a man of no worldly celebrity or greatness, was the father of David; Bethlehem, a village or small town of Judea, his birth-place. How clearly did these shadow forth the humble condition of Jesus. He was the son of Mary, a poor virgin espoused to Joseph a carpenter. And precisely the same place, Bethlehem, gave birth to David, and to David's Lord, the world's Messiah. Hence it was written by the prophet, "And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Juda," &c., Matt. ii. 5, 6.

III. *In his Occupation.*

David was originally a shepherd. It was emphatically said of him to Samuel, "He keepeth the sheep," 1 Sam. xvi. 11. In his pastoral employment how strikingly he typified Jesus, the "Great Shepherd of the sheep." To a shepherd Christ often likened himself. He said, "I am the good shepherd." As such he evinced unequalled affection and tenderness for his flock. He gave his life for his sheep. He leads them into green pastures. He preserves them from the roaring destroying lion. He restoreth them when they wander. He healeth all their diseases. And finally he receives them into his heavenly fold, and causeth them to lie down, by the rivers of his pleasure, forever and ever.

IV. *In his Person and Moral Endowments.*

The personal beauty of David is the subject of inspired testimony. His pious and holy character are expressly described and exhibited in the history of his life. Of Jesus, he said, when speaking by the power of inspiration, "Thou art *fairer* than the children of men, grace is poured into thy lips," &c., Ps. xlv. 2. All moral excellencies were concentrated in Jesus. In him light and truth centred, holiness and love dwelt. Righteousness and peace were perfected. He was the express image of the purity and goodness of God.

V. *In his Exaltation to the Throne of Israel.*

In the exaltation of David we behold the direct interference of God. The evident work of his all-wise and blessed providence. See 1 Sam. xvi. 3, &c. For this exalted station God qualified him in the day of his anointing, by giving him his Holy Spirit, 1 Sam. xvi. 13. In this how forcibly are we led to contemplate the royal character of Messiah the Prince. That David whom the Lord anointed to be king in Zion, whose sceptre is a sceptre of righteousness, and whose dominions are destined to encircle the whole earth, and whose reign is to be a reign of everlasting mercy and truth. For his kingly office God anointed his son Jesus, with the oil of gladness above his fellows, Heb. i. 8.

VI. *In his Prophetical Office.*

David was richly imbued with the spirit of prophecy. His predictions are numerous. He predicted extensively of the person, work, suffering, glory, and kingdom of the Messiah. Jesus is also a prophet. A prophet possessing the powers of inspiration in himself. For the Spirit dwelt in him in all its immeasurable fulness. He is also the source and the chief subject of prophecy. To him bear all the prophets witness.

VII. *In his Sufferings and Enemies.*

David had to bear the malignant, envious dislike of Saul. The opposition of the

surrounding nations. The blasphemous rage of Goliath. The deceitful conspiracy of his own subjects. And the unfaithfulness and crimes of his own family. What room for enlargement here, on the sufferings and enemies of Christ! Jesus had to conflict with the powers of darkness. The envy of Herod and the chief priests. The hypocrisy of the scribes and Pharisees. The defection of his own disciples, and the wicked perfidy of Judas, who betrayed him. Many of David's psalms were clearly expressive of his own sufferings and enemies, and yet prophetically alluding to the sufferings and enemies of Christ.

VIII. *In his signal Victories.*

The victories of David were signal and numerous. See these celebrated, 2 Sam. xviii. 10. God often went with him, and in the name of the Lord he mightily triumphed over his enemies. The lion and the bear, Goliath and the Philistines, were all vanquished by the son of Jesse. Jesus too triumphed over all his foes. He overcame the wicked one in the wilderness. He overcame the powers of darkness and sin, in the mighty miracles which he wrought. He overcame death and hell, by his resurrection from the dead. He is the mighty and blessed conqueror, who is represented by John, in the visions of Patmos, as seated on a white horse, and going forth from conquering to conquer.

But David was a frail man; his victories were obtained by the shedding of blood, and his course was connected with the misery of his fellow-men. Our David is the perfect and immaculate Christ; his victories are bloodless, and his course is one of universal happiness and joy.

How happy are his loyal subjects! How precious the privileges of his kingdom! And how universally glorious shall be his dominion and reign!

X.—SOLOMON A TYPE OF CHRIST.

"A greater than Solomon is here."—*Luke* ii. 31.

The history of Solomon is connected with much that is dark, mysterious, and distressing. He commenced his public career under the most bright and encouraging circumstances. The son of the pious David, he had been favored with his religious instructions and example. He had been interested, too, in many fervent prayers which had ascended to God in his behalf. He began his course in a way so devoutly and wisely, that God greatly approved of him and gave him largely beyond what he had sought of him in prayer, and for a time the prospects before him were more fraught with hope and promise than any who had swayed the sceptre in Israel. But he did not maintain that piety and purity with which he commenced his reign; he wandered awfully from God, and exhibited in his own conduct the weakness and frailty even of the wisest and best of men, when they do not closely and faithfully depend upon God for assistance and strength. It is to be hoped that the book of Ecclesiastes was written after he had experienced the emptiness of the world, and the bitterness of sin, and as such that it indicates his repentance and restoration to the favor and service of God. It is very clear in his public movements, that he was an eminent type of Jesus Christ. He was so,

I. *As the Descendant of David.*

Jesus is described as both the root and offspring of David. And there is one scripture which was originally expressly applied to Solomon as David's son, 2 Sam. vii. 14, which is afterwards as distinctly applied to Jesus. "I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son," Heb. i. 6. We need not try to prove the genealogical descent of Jesus from David, Matt. i. 6–16.

II. *In his extraordinary Knowledge and Wisdom.*

Solomon prayed for wisdom, and God richly endowed him with it. He seemed to understand all the principles of nature. He was celebrated as a sacred poet, and his proverbs exhibit the supernatural attainments which heavenly inspiration conferred upon him. Jesus is the wisdom of God. In him dwelt all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. Peter said truly to him, "Lord, thou knowest all things." He is emphatically wise of heart, and his understanding is infinite.

III. *As Monarch of Israel*

No king in Israel ever possessed equal glory and riches with Solomon. His reign seemed typical of Christ's regal character.

(1) In its righteousness and equity.

(2) In its riches and glory, representing

he true spiritual riches and dignity of the kingdom of Christ.

(3) In its peaceableness. Jesus is "The Prince of peace." His kingdom is a peaceable kingdom. He brought peace and good will to a rebellious world. He confers peace, which the world can neither give nor take away.

IV. *In his Connection with the Temple*

He had it in his heart to honor God by erecting a splendid edifice for his worship and glory. He entered zealously on the work. He persevered till the erection was completed. He dedicated it, with the greatest solemnity and devotion to God. In these things Christ and his church are evidently typified in the spirit and conduct of Solomon.

Jesus came expressly to rear a spiritual edifice in the world for the honor and glory of the living God. The materials of which it is composed, he redeemed to God by his own blood. These by his Spirit and word he prepares and builds up, into a house and dwelling or habitation for God. These he sacredly dedicated to God by intercessory prayer, John xvii. All the services and ordinances of this temple, Jesus, as supreme Prince, and great High-priest, he solemnly fixed and established. And he is still rearing this glorious building, and shall do so until the head-stone is elevated amid shouts of "Grace, grace unto t!"

The heart of Christ is fully set on this, and all the dispensations of time, and events of providence, are tending to this one august and inconceivably grand consummation.

But a *greater* than Solomon is here. Greater even in those things for which Solomon was most justly celebrated. Greater in wisdom,—greater in true glory,—greater in the extent of his dominions,—greater in the happiness of his subjects,—greater in the righteous and benevolent characteristics of his administration. Solomon's glory declined, and his honors faded away. His kingdom has been revolutionized, and the site of the temple he erected has been ploughed up. Christ's glories are increasingly resplendent. His honors are ever increasing. His kingdom cannot be moved. His reign shall be forever, and his sceptre shall be swayed from the rivers to the ends of the earth.

APPLICATION

1. How happy, dignified, and secure the subjects of Christ's kingdom.

2. How unspeakably wonderful his person and perfections.

3. Let his people celebrate his praise.

4. Let his foes fall down before him and kiss the sceptre of mercy which he extends to all.

5. His obdurate enemies shall be covered with shame and perish forever.

XI.—JONAH A TYPE OF CHRIST.

"No sign shall be given but that of the prophet Jonah."—*Matt.* xii. 39

JONAH was one of the least amiable or interesting of the prophets. Neither as to piety, talents, or usefulness, will he bear any comparison with his fellow seers, who were employed to reveal the mind of God to the people. How greatly is this disparity seen, when we compare him with the assiduous and devoted Samuel, with the devotional psalmist, with the evangelical Isaiah, with the sublime Ezekiel, or the pathetic Jeremiah. Yet, as in a great house there are necessarily vessels of wood and clay, as well as of silver and gold, so we see the same variety among the saints of God's family, and the officers of his spiritual kingdom. Jesus has greatly honored Jonah, in referring to his history and sufferings as being figurative of his own mission, death, and resurrection from the grave. In glancing at the typical character of Jonah, we may notice,

I. *The striking Signification of his Name.*

Jonah signifies dove,—a striking emblem of the meek and gentle Jesus. He was meek and lowly of heart. He did not lift up his voice and strive, but with open arms of affection did he receive the weary and afflicted, and gave them rest. When he was anointed for the great mission, "the Holy Spirit descended like a dove lighting upon him," Matt. iii. 16. Jonah was a type of Christ,

II. *As a Proclaimer of God's will to Men.*

Jonah's message was one which charged the people with guilt, called them to repentance, and assured them of the readiness of God to exercise mercy if they re

pented, but declared the vengeance of God if they repented not. These four leading particulars are evidently discernible in the preaching of Jesus Christ. He charged men with sin. He enjoined repentance. He offered forgiveness. He predicted God's wrath to the incorrigibly guilty.

III. *In his Sufferings and Deliverance.*

Jonah in attempting to flee from God's presence, was overtaken by a fearful tempest. The superstitions of the crew suggested the casting of lots. The lot fell upon Jonah. He offered himself to be the propitiatory victim, and said, "Take me up, and cast me into the sea," Jonah i. 12. After vainly striving against the storm, at length they took Jonah and cast him into the sea. For his preservation God provided a great fish, which was the ark of his safety for three days and three nights, ch. i. 15–17. In the belly of the fish, by reason of his affliction, he cried unto God, and the Lord heard and mercifully delivered him, ch. ii. 1–10. How strange and wonderful this series of events in reference to Jonah! How significant when viewed as typifying the sufferings and resurrection of Jesus!

(1) In the storm we have a striking representation of God's righteous displeasure and wrath against a sinful world. (2) In Jonah's willingness to be thrown into the sea, we have the voluntary engagement of Christ as the substitute for guilt. (3) In the cessation of the storm we have the perfect satisfaction of God, with the sufferings of his Son, and his desire for the reconciliation of the world to himself. (4) In the distressing sorrows and mournful complaints of Jonah, when surrounded by the waters of the great deep, we have a faint picture of the overwhelming anguish and grief of Christ, when presenting his soul an offering for sin. Especially when prostrate in Gethsemane, and when expiring on the cross. See Matt. xxvi. 36–39, and Matt. xxvii. 46. (5) In the preservation of Jonah we have clearly prefigured the care which Jehovah took of the body of Jesus; his resurrection from the dead the third day. In this Jonah was an express type of Christ's burial and resurrection from the dead, and as such this was to be the last great sign which God would give to the Jews of the Messiahship of Jesus. A sign so great and peculiar that nothing but the deepest unbelief and infatuation could possibly reject. (6) In the success of Jonah's preaching after his deliverance, we have brought to our remembrance the successful proclamation of the gospel of Christ, and the rapid spread of divine truth in the days of the apostles.

Jonah after all very imperfectly typified Christ. His unwillingness to obey God, how unlike the cheerful obedience of Jesus, and his readiness at all times to do the will of his Father. His envious spirit at the repenting of the Ninevites, how unlike Christ rejoicing in spirit when he beheld the progress of his gospel, and the kingdom of Satan falling as lightning from heaven. His discontented and fretful temper, how opposite to the holy, calm, resigned spirit of Jesus. Indeed a greater, one infinitely surpassing Jonah, is here. Greater in the mission he undertook—the salvation of a world. Greater in the sufferings he endured. Greater in the deliverance he effected. A few mariners escaped death in the one case, a world was delivered from the curse in the other. Greater in his personal dignity and glory. Greater in his office, character, and work. Jesus was Jonah's master, Jonah's Lord. This very Jonah must have exercised faith in the coming Saviour, to have escaped the just wrath of God, and the true desert of his own sin.

APPLICATION.

1. Christ as the propitiation for sin we would make known to all men.

2. The peril of sin and unbelief we would urge upon all careless lethargic sinners.

3. Faith in Christ as the only Saviour we would proclaim to all who are inquiring, "What must we do to be saved?"

XII.—CHRIST TYPIFIED BY JACOB'S LADDER.

"And behold a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven: and behold the angels of God ascending and descending on it."—*Gen.* xxviii. 12.

At sundry times, in divers manners, God spake unto the fathers. He revealed his mind to Noah as to the deluge. To Abraham as to his will respecting him, and his promise that in his seed would all the families of the earth be blessed. To Jacob God revealed himself on several occasions

The scene at Bethel was peculiarly solemn and interesting. Jacob was now alone; far from the dwelling of his affectionate parents. Fleeing from the face of his incensed brother. On his journey to Padan-aram, overtaken by the shades of evening, he laid himself down to sleep. The earth was his bed, the canopy of heaven his only covering. A stone his pillow. There, overcome by the fatigue of travelling, having doubtless commended his soul to God, he fell asleep. In a vision of the night God appeared, and said, "I am the Lord," &c., ver. 13. God evidently designed to cheer and strengthen the mind of Jacob, and the whole was intended to give him an assurance of his interest in the kind arrangements of a benign and watchful Providence. But the vision of the ladder seems to present a beautiful emblem of the Saviour; to this, then, let us direct our present attention. See Christ's authority for this, John i. 51. It might typify,

I. *The Person of the Saviour.*

The top of the ladder "reached to heaven." Jesus, the second Adam, was of heaven, heavenly. He dwelt there in the bosom of the Father. His glory filled heaven. He was the Prince royal of heaven. The Most High and blessed Potentate. But the ladder "was fixed upon the earth." And in this we have shadowed forth the humanity of Christ. God with God, he became man with men. He became an inhabitant of the earth. He was born into it. He took upon him the nature of man—was of the seed of Abraham, Gal. iv. 4. He dwelt upon the earth, tabernacled amongst us, and displayed his "glory, the glory of the only-begotten of the Father," &c., John i. 14. He sojourned for more than thirty years upon the earth, and blessed mankind with the riches both of his providence and grace; filling heaven with the rays of his glory, yet, at the same time, he was filling the earth with his goodness and mercy. See this strikingly stated by Christ, John iii. 13. It might typify,

II. *The Mediatorial Work of Christ.*

The ladder reached from heaven to earth, therefore *united* both. This was the grand object of the Saviour, to connect heaven with earth. Earth had revolted, thrown off its allegiance, was in a state of rebellion. Jesus sought to restore it to rightful authority, and thus to bring it beneath the smile and favor of God. That separation which sin had effected he came to make up. That ruin which sin had produced he came to repair. That misery which sin had entailed, he came to remove. He came to bring down heaven to earth, and to raise earth to the holiness and bliss of heaven. Or it might typify,

III. *Christ as the only Way to the Father.*

God appointed Jesus to be the medium of communication between himself and man. And Christ is the only way of access for the sinner to God. Jesus said, "I am the way." "*No* man cometh unto the Father but by *me*." In Christ God is well pleased, and all who are in Christ are accepted of him. Here he requires that all we do be done in Christ's name. Faith must be in Christ's name. Prayer and thanksgiving must be in Christ's name All obedience must be presented to him in, and through, Christ Jesus. If we go to God for pardoning mercy—renewing grace —or adopting love, Christ is the only way. He is the true propitiatory, where we have access to God, and enjoy fellowship with him. It might typify,

IV. *The Accessibility of Christ to the perishing Sinner.*

The ladder was placed upon the earth, close to the spot where Jacob lay and slept Now herein we see how near Christ is to us. Not a Saviour in heaven only, but on earth. A Saviour for us and with us. Need not say, "Who shall ascend," &c. A Saviour who has stooped to our very condition, and brought his mercy within the reach of every perishing sinner. It seemed to typify,

V. *The Connection of Angels with the Work and Kingdom of Christ.*

"For behold the angels of God ascending and descending on it." Angels, although not personally concerned in the nature Christ assumed, or in the sacrifice he presented, yet manifested the deepest interest in all that related to Christ, when upon the earth. We meet them in company with Christ in Bethlehem In the desert. On the mount of transfiguration In the garden. At the sepulchre, and on the summit of Olivet. With Christ's personal work on earth, their visits of mercy did not terminate. They ministered to Peter. Conveyed messages to Philip, to Cornelius, and others; and, it is evident they feel overflowing joy on the conver

sion of sinners, and minister cheerfully to the heirs of salvation. Or it might typify,

VI. *The Heavenly State to which Christ will exalt his People.*

The ladder "reached to heaven;" led to the presence of God. A striking view of the salvation of Christ. Present in its enjoyment. Progressive in its character, raising us higher and higher above the world, and terminating in heaven. Christ will exalt all his followers to enjoy the presence of his Father, forever and ever.

IMPROVEMENT

Let the subject lead us,

1. To rejoice in the reconciliation which Christ has effected for us. Every obstacle is removed out of the way of the sinner's recovery to God.

2. To avail ourselves of the invitations which the gospel presents to us to come to Christ and have abundant life.

3. To remember there is but *one* way to heaven, and that way is Christ.

4. Believers must advance in divine things. "Grow in grace." "Go from strength to strength," &c. "Giving all diligence," &c.

5. Let the glorious consummation cheer the Christian in this, the house of his pilgrimage.

XIII. THE BURNING BUSH A TYPE OF THE CHURCH.

"Behold, the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed."—*Exod.* iii. 2.

The striking phenomenon which arrested the attention of Moses, was intended doubtless to suggest a variety of important particulars to the mind of that servant of God. God chose it for the purpose of revealing his mind and designs respecting his afflicted and oppressed people. One of the most sublime emblems of deity is fire; and here, out of the midst of the flame, Jehovah spoke, and proclaimed himself the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. He also made known his gracious purpose of delivering his people from their Egyptian task-masters, and bringing them unto the good land flowing with milk and honey. It is impossible to conceive of a scene more solemn and magnificent than that the text presents before us. In the dreary deserts, where Sinai and Horeb lifted their awful summits and sublime grandeur, behold, a bush enveloped in flames. Moses, the servant of God, witnessing with devout astonishment the bush still unconsumed, is about to draw near to inspect the wondrous sight, when God makes known the sanctity of the spot, and commands him to draw near with reverence, for the place on which he stood was holy ground. The voice of God—the burning unconsumed bush—the prophet Moses—the projected emancipation of the hundreds of thousands of enslaved Israelites. What topics for instructive meditation! But we confine ourselves to the bush, and in that we see a striking type of the church of God. Observe,

I. *The Metaphor itself.*

"A bush." Apparently mean, worthless and perishing. Just what the church appears to be, and the estimation in which it is held by the world. Nothing in it of worldly grandeur. No earthly pomp. No human embellishments. No temporal glory. Like its head and Lord, as "a root out of a dry ground, without form and comeliness." Was it not so in the time of Moses, oppressed and grieved in Egypt? In the time of the Saviour? Behold his disciples. Not many great or learned, chiefly the poor, &c. Has it not ever been so to a very great extent? Is it not so now? The true church of Jesus, but composed of the humbler ranks of life; still a mere bush; overlooked, despised, contemned; deemed insignificant and worthless.

II. *Its present Condition.*

A bush in the "desert." Such is the condition of Christ's church, situated in a desert. In the desert of the world. Brought out of Egypt, yet not established in Canaan. To the spiritual soul, the soul is in a dreary, barren wilderness. Bleak, sterile, and deficient in those supplies the renewed soul requires. Exposed to tempests and storms. Liable to the fierce attacks of beasts of prey. The very opposite of what she shall be, when caught up to the verdant scenes of the heavenly paradise. Observe,

III. *Its suffering State.*

"The bush burned with fire." It has often happened that the people of God have had literally to go through flames to heaven. In the first Christian persecution the fires of martyrdom were scarcely ever extinguished. But fire is the symbol of

extreme suffering. The state of the church in the world is that of suffering. Thus Peter speaks of the trial of faith being more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with *fire*," 1 Pet. i. 7. Again, he says, "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you," ch. iv. 12. In all ages and countries the spirit of the world has been opposed to the spirit of the people of God. The seed of the serpent have ever hated, and, to the very utmost of their ability, persecuted the people of God. Thus Cain murdered Abel. Ishmael mocked Isaac. Pharaoh oppressed the Israelites. And all generations of God's people have experienced that only through much tribulation could they enter the kingdom. These fiery sufferings are, however, purifying in their nature. They are allowed and overruled for the church's real good, and they not only conform the members to their suffering head, but work out for them a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.

IV. *The Divine Preservation.*

"And the bush was not consumed." Fire was adapted to destroy it. A mere bush is soon burned. But not so here. The flame consumes it not. It is preserved amid hottest flames. Now consider this,

1. As an historical fact.

The church has ever been hated and persecuted, yet never destroyed. Ever in flames, yet never consumed. Indeed, her sufferings preserved her purity, and in proportion to her purity has she ever flourished. The winds of persecution scattered the disciples everywhere, and wherever they sojourned, the truth was established and prevailed. From the ashes of the martyrs a numerous progeny sprang forth, which no power could destroy; which no fires could burn. Amid all the changes, and wars, and revolutions of the world, the feeble bush has remained "unconsumed." Consider this,

2. As to its true cause.

"God has *dwelt* in the *midst* of the bush." God has been on her side; yea, he has been in the midst of her, therefore she has not been consumed. Thus did he preserve the three Hebrew worthies in the fiery furnace. What he did for them he has ever done for his people. He has been with them, and round about them, and therefore their enemies could not prevail against them. He has witnessed all the malignity with which she has been treated. He has seen every weapon which has been formed against her. He has hearkened to all the stratagems of her foes. And when they have counselled to raze her foundations, or to consume her with flames, he who dwelt within her, held them in derision. He who sat on high, laughed, when the kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers took counsel together, Ps. ii. 1–4.

APPLICATION.

1. The subject admonishes those of God's people who complain of sufferings. This is the necessary state of the church here. Suffering must precede glory. The cross must be borne before the crown is given. "If we suffer with him," &c. All have been meetened and gone to heaven this way.

2. The subject is full of consolation. In every trial God is in the midst of her. He is our help and our shield. He will never leave nor forsake, neither shall his cause ever perish from the earth.

3. Let persecutors remember that they fight against God. They cannot prevail, their madness will involve them in awful and interminable ruin. The enemies of the church of Jesus have perished, but the cause they hated and persecuted still lives. Still in flames, yet unconsumed!

4. Let Christians act worthy of the divine presence. God is with us; then how seriously, and reverently, and holily, should we walk before him. His eye is upon us every moment: then with what hallowed care should we strive to do those things pleasing in his sight. Be patient and resigned, yet unyielding and resolved; stand fast in the faith; quit yourselves like men; be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. If God be for us, and with us, who can be against us?

XIV.—CHRIST TYPIFIED BY THE PASCHAL LAMB.

"Christ our passover is sacrificed for us."—*1 Cor.* v. 7

THE apostle has already shown us, in this passage, the true typical character of the paschal lamb. That sacrifice, and the ceremonial connected with it, seems rich

ly fraught with incidents peculiarly applicable to the person and work of Christ. Doubtless, both the officiating priest and the devout worshipper ever looked beyond the literal passover, to the true Lamb of God, who should take away the sin of the world. The appointment of the paschal lamb was immediately connected with the deliverance of the Israelites from Egyptian bondage, and, throughout, had direct reference to the redemption of the world by the sacrifice of Christ Jesus. Observe,

I. *The Victim appointed.*

This was a "lamb." Now it was required that this lamb should be—a *male*—a year old—without blemish. In other words, it was to be one of the most perfect of its species. The best the flock and fold could yield. Herein was typified the innocency, meekness, and excellency of the Son of God.

(1) He was the perfection of our nature. Without frailty, without spot.

(2) He was offered in the vigor of life. When of full age. In the midst of his manhood, he offered himself to God.

(3) In him the innocency and meekness of the lamb were fully exhibited. "He was led as a lamb," &c., Isa. liii. 7; 1 Pet. i. 19; Rev. v. 6, &c. Consider,

II. *The Mode in which it was to be presented to God.*

(1) It was to be separated from the flock. Thus *Jesus* was fore-ordained and set apart by the Father to the great work of redemption. As such the prophets all bare witness of him, and predicted his mission of mercy to our world. "In the fulness of the time," &c.

(2) After the separation, the lamb was to be kept alive *four* days. Thus *Jesus* appeared about four thousand years after the promise was first revealed to our first parents. And it was in the *fourth* year after his public consecration to his work in Jordan that Jesus laid down his life a sacrifice for sin.

(3) The lamb was to be presented to God on the fourteenth of the first month, (March,) at the full of the moon. Thus was Jesus literally offered on the precise day, when the paschal lamb was slain. When the high-priest was about appearing before the Lord, with the blood of the passover, did Jesus expire, when the veil of the temple was rent in twain, &c. How wonderfully exact the type, and the great antitype.

(4) The lamb was to be *slain*. By the *priest; publicly*, and in the *evening* of the day. Thus Jesus was put to death. He, as the priest, offered himself, laid down his own life. Gave himself, publicly, before the thousands of the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and that both in the evening of the world, and in the evening of the day, about three o'clock in the afternoon.

(5) The lamb was to be *roasted* with *fire*. In the manner in which this was done, was strikingly exhibited the very form of Christ's death upon the cross. And the fire seemed properly to set forth the extreme severity of Christ's sufferings, especially those mental and spiritual agonies which he endured when he "made his *soul* an offering for sin." Observe,

(6) Not a *bone* of the lamb was to be *broken*. How very singularly did the providence of God preserve Jesus from having his legs broken, as was common with those crucified, and which took place with both of those who were suspended by his side. See John xix. 32, 33. Such are the chief points of resemblance in the *preparation* of the paschal lamb and Christ. Notice,

III. *The Way in which the Paschal Feast was to be regarded.*

1. The flesh of the paschal lamb must be eaten.

Thus showing the necessity of personally participating of Christ's virtue and merits, John vi. 54. And there are several things in the original institution deserving of attention.

(1) All the lamb must be eaten. So Jesus, in all his offices and work, must be received. We must have a whole Christ Christ undivided, fully and entirely ours.

(2) It was to be eaten only by the seed of Abraham; the circumcised. So Jesus is only and can only be received by faith. Unless we believe in him, we cannot enjoy the benefits of his death.

(3) It was to be eaten standing, to denote their readiness to leave Egypt, and commence their pilgrimage towards the land of promise. So Christ is only really received by those who are ready to forsake the world, and to take up his cross and follow him.

(4) It was to be eaten with bitter herbs. Faith in Jesus Christ is ever associated with godly sorrow for sin. Repentance an

believing are inseparable. "They shall look on him whom they have pierced," &c., Zech. xii. 10.

(5) It was to be eaten with unleavened bread. And Christ must be received with sincerity of heart. In the exercise of love and truth, with purity of motive and purpose. Without malice or hypocrisy.

(6) The reception of the lamb was as a social feast, and not private or solitary. In this was typified the social character of Christ's church, and especially the unity of those who surround the table of the Lord, and have fellowship in Christ's death.

2. The blood of the paschal lamb was to be sprinkled on the door posts of their houses, Exod. xii. 22.

Thus the blood of Christ must be sprinkled on our consciences, that we may be cleansed from all sin, Heb. x. 22; 1 John i. 7.

3. In the reception of the paschal lamb, they were to commemorate the delivering hand of the Lord. See Exod. xii. 26, 27.

Thus believers, in receiving the symbols of the body and blood of Jesus, are to do it in celebration of the great salvation which Jesus has wrought out for all who obey him. In doing this, they testify their faith and hope in Christ's death as an atoning sacrifice for guilt, and show forth their love to it, and their trust in it, until he shall come again.

APPLICATION.

1. The observance of the passover was that which distinguished those who were preserved from the destroying angel. Faith in Jesus, and obedience to him alone, will enable us to receive the saving benefits of his death. He who believeth in Christ will certainly love and obey him, and such only shall be saved. The unbeliever will assuredly perish.

2. To Christ, as the true paschal lamb, all sinners are freely invited. He taketh away the sin of the world. He is the Saviour of all men, but especially of them that believe.

3. In the Lord's supper, the great doctrines of our ruin and help are prominently set before us. Let that ordinance be highly valued, and seriously and regularly regarded.

4. To celebrate the glories of the Lamb will form a portion of our employment in heaven, forever and ever

XV.—CHRIST TYPIFIED BY THE SMITTEN ROCK.

"And the Lord said unto Moses, Go on before the people, and take with thee the elders of Israel; and thy rod, wherewith thou smotest the river, take in thine hand, and go. Behold, I will stand before thee there upon the rock in Horeb; and thou shalt smite the rock," &c.—*Exod.* xvii. 5, 6.

"That rock was Christ."—1 *Cor.* x. 4.

THE apostle could not mean more than that the rock of Horeb was a type of Jesus. That it had a distinct reference to him, and was intended not merely to supply the Israelites with water in the wilderness, but to point to Christ, the rock of salvation, from whom should flow the waters of life for all people. As such let us examine the original narrative, and see the various typical points presented for our consideration. We notice,

I. *The Rock typified the Person of Christ.*

The rock exhibits Christ,

1. In his exaltation and glory.

As the rock lifts its head above all around, and stands forth with sublime prominence—so Jesus, in his divine nature, is higher than the kings of the earth, yea, higher and more glorious than angels, above all, God blessed for evermore.

2. The rock typified the strength and power of Jesus.

Rock is the emblem of strength. Unlike the yielding earth or gliding sand. It will bear pressure. It stands before the tempest and the storm. The lightning of heaven and the roaring torrent affect it not How emblematical of Jesus. He possesses all power. All the elements of nature are subject to him and under his direct control. By his fiat he created all things, and "he upholdeth all things by the word of his power"

3. The rock typified his unchanging stability.

No other object in nature seems at all expressive of immutability The sea, the air, the heavenly bodies, in their respective movements, all indicate change. The rock is the emblem of fixedness, and here the term everlasting is by accommodation applied to the hills. Jesus is the blessed

and immutable one who changes not, the same yesterday, to-day, and forever. "His years fail not;" "I am what I am," is his unalterable prerogative.

4. The rock typified the humble and mean appearance of Jesus.

The rock amid all its loftiness, &c., bears sterility on its surface. The opposite of the fertile and fruitful earth. How unlikely to supply the wants of the thousands of Israel. Thus did Christ appear when clothed with our nature. There was nothing to the carnal eye attractive He was to the Jews as a rock of offence, and stone of stumbling. And the doctrine of salvation through his cross, was to the Jews a stumbling-block, &c. Observe,

II. *The Smiting of the Rock was typical of the Sufferings of Jesus.*

1. The rock was smitten by God's command. Christ suffered by the will and appointment of God. God gave him, and sent him forth, expressly to suffer as a propitiatory sacrifice. He was the Lamb of God, raised up to take away the sin of the world, see Zech. xiii. 7.

2. The rock was smitten by the rod of Moses.

Moses, as the lawgiver smiting the rock, is strikingly a representation of Jesus meeting the claims of the law, bearing its penalties in his own person. Being made a curse for sinners, although he knew no sin. He obeyed all the enactments of the law, and so far was clear; but as the sinner's substitute, he had to sustain all the wrath which transgression had incurred, Gal. iii. 13.

3. The rock was smitten in the presence of the elders of Israel.

Christ suffered publicly. He was arraigned, tried, condemned, scourged, and crucified before the elders of Israel. His sufferings were to be open and manifest, (not done in a corner, secretly,) as they were to be the leading facts the apostles and disciples were to make known to the world.

III. *The gushing Stream was typical of the benefits flowing from Christ's Death to Mankind.*

1. The stream was that which was needed by the people.

Salvation was that of all things most precious to the guilty condemned sons of men. As nothing could be a substitute for the water the Israelites desired, so there is nothing to be compared, and nothing can be substituted for the saving mercy and grace of God.

2. The stream flowed not till the rock was smitten.

All the blessings of providence and grace come to us through the merits of the mediator. "It behooved him to suffer," &c. "Without shedding of blood," &c.

3. The stream issued forth abundantly.

The supply was ample, more than equal to their wants. So the benefits of Christ's death meet all the exigencies of sinners. There is no lack. It is an overflowing and exhaustless fulness.

Enough for all, enough for each,—
Enough for evermore."

4. The stream was free and gratuitous to all the children of Israel.

As there was no limitation, so there was no restriction. All required it; and it was for all. So the benefits of Christ's death are for all men. No exclusion on God's part. "He willeth not the death of a sinner," &c. None on Christ's part, for he "died for all." None on the Spirit's part, for "the Spirit, as well as the bride, says, Come and all that will, may come and take of the water of life freely." Rev. xxii. 17.

APPLICATION.

1. The water which flowed from the rock was obtained by the will of God. The water of life by the unknown agonies of the Son of God.

2. That water only supplied the thirst of the body. The water of life, the vast and boundless desires of the soul.

3. That was for Israel, this for the world. Let every sinner come, then, and receive the living waters of salvation freely, without money and without price.

4. To reject or neglect this water, is to expose our deathless souls to irretrievable ruin.

XVI.—CHRIST TYPIFIED BY THE MANNA.

"Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness and are dead. This is the bread which cometh down from heaven that a man may eat thereof and not die."—*John* vi. 49, 50.

Jesus has graciously explained to us the spiritual signification of the manna with which God supplied his people in the desert

To them it was one of the chief blessings he bounty of God provided. It was the staff of their life. But it also was designed to lead their minds to that gift which God had promised to their fathers—the Messiah, who was emphatically to be "the bread of life" to a perishing world. We do not envy the Jews who were privileged with the type, and who were fed with angels' food; but we rejoice with Jew and Gentile, that we now possess "the bread which cometh down from heaven," &c. Let us contemplate the subject, with a view of discerning the resemblance between the "manna," and Christ "the bread of life." Notice,

I. *The Origin of the Manna.*

It was food from heaven. It came from he munificent storehouse of God. The Israelites were in a condition of need. God graciously compassionated them, and bountifully sent them food from heaven. Christ as the bread of life is the free gift of God. He came down from heaven to supply the wants of our starving race. He gave himself for the life of the world. Observe,

II. *The Peculiarities of the Manna.*

The manna was a small grain, as little as a seed of coriander. It was particularly sweet, like wafers of fine honey. In form it was round, and in color white. In each of these particulars it seemed to prefigure the Saviour. In his appearance to the sons of men, he was as a root out of a dry ground, nothing of earthly dignity or glory was associated with him. In his nature, offices, and merit, he is unspeakably sweet and precious to the believer. The roundness of the manna shadowed forth the completeness or perfection of Christ. Immaculate, eternal, and unchanging. In the color of the manna, we are led to contemplate the holiness of his person and the righteousness of his administrations. Notice,

III. *The Manner in which it was bestowed.*

The manna was bestowed freely, abundantly, every morning. Jesus Christ as the heavenly bread was given freely, the result of God's wise and overflowing grace. In Christ there is an abundance of mercy and grace. An exhaustless fulness; even all the fulness of God. Jesus too is the daily bread of the soul. He is the morning portion of his people. He was given, too, by promise in the morning of the world As the manna fell in double quantities on the sixth day so as to supply their need on the sabbath, so Christ was more fully revealed, and more plentifully made known and more graciously offered on the morning of the sixth day, when he appeared in our flesh as the Messiah and Saviour of the world. Notice,

IV. *The Way in which it was received and used.*

(1) It fell round about the camp. So Jesus is made known by the preaching of the gospel and the ordinances of Christianity. (2) It was designed specifically for the Israelites. So Jesus for believers. Offered freely to all men, yet *faith* is requisite in each and all who savingly enjoy his gracious benefits. (3) The Israelites had to go forth and gather it. So Jesus, the gift of God, must be received into the heart, by a believing appropriation of him to our souls. (4) They gathered it early and daily. And Christ is to be the chief object of our solicitudes and desires. He must be preferred to all things. In all things have the pre-eminence. And daily must we live upon him. He is our souls' unfailing support, and essentially needful to us every moment. (5) The manna was to be prepared by being ground and baked with fire. Thus it was necessary that Christ should suffer and bear our iniquities, that the wrath, justly denounced against sin, should consume him as the great sacrifice, in order that we might have reconciliation and life through his name. And this is the essence of the gospel, that "Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures," &c., 1 Cor. xv. 1–3. (6) All the manna was to be eaten. Jesus must be received wholly and fully. In his twofold nature—God and man. In his threefold offices—as prophet, priest, and king. In his obedient life, sacrificial death, resurrection power, and heavenly glory. (7) The manna, if laid up, and not used, putrefied, &c. So Christ preached and offered, and not personally received, will be the savor of death, and expose such to more aggravated punishment; seeing they have rejected the anointed Jesus, and done despite to the richest exhibition of the grace of God. But the manna could not fully typify the excellencies of Christ. The manna was designed for the body Jesus is the bread of the soul, and the Saviour

both of body and soul. The manna was only a temporary provision, it ceased when they got to Canaan. Jesus is the present and everlasting good of his people. On earth and in heaven, in time and eternity, he will be all their joy and salvation. Those who ate the manna died. Jesus is the eternal life of his people. The bread which if a man eat thereof he shall never die. The manna was limited to the thousands of Israel; Jesus is given and freely offered to the whole world, 1 John iv. 14; John iii. 14–17.

APPLICATION.

1. Now is Christ Jesus as the bread of life freely offered to you.

2. You cannot reject him and live.

3. Your opportunities and mercies are rapidly passing away. Procrastination has been ruinous to countless myriads of souls.

4. Then gratefully, humbly, and believingly receive Jesus as the only Saviour, suited to your state, and now graciously offered you in the gospel of life.

5. The health, and vigor, and joy of Christians, greatly depend on feeding freely and constantly on this bread sent down from heaven. See John vi. 53, 54.

XVII.—CHRIST TYPIFIED BY THE TWO GOATS.

"And he shall take the two goats, and present them before the Lord at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation. And Aaron shall cast lots upon the two goats; one lot for the Lord, and the other for the scape-goat."—*Levit.* xvi. 7, 8.

NONE of the ancient sacrifices more fully exhibited the work and expiatory sacrifice of Jesus, than the institution of the goats, both of which were necessary to give a true typical representation of the Messiah. In reading the divine account of this offering, the mind is led, as it were instinctively, to those striking passages of holy writ, where Jesus is described as "bearing our sins," as "bearing the sins of many," and, as "taking away the sins of the world." How very great a portion of the epistle to the Hebrews is occupied in giving full and vivid illustrations of the ancient sacrifices, as referring to, and ending in, the vicarious sufferings and death of the Son of God. In contemplating the two goats let us observe what is said,

1. *As to the Goat that was put to Death.*

The goat which was to be sacrificed was decided by lot. And thus it was considered as the choice and appointment of God. And it was also considered, especially for the Lord; that is, devoted to a sacred purpose by the will of God. How this applies to the choice and appointment of Jesus, by the express will of his Father, to be the redeemer of the world, and to redeem it by the shedding of his blood. He was sent forth by the Father. He was the elect or chosen of the Father. "Him did God, by his determinate counsel and foreknowledge, deliver up, Acts ii. 23. Hence, just before Jesus went to the garden, he said, "The Son of man goeth as it is written of him," &c. Matt. xxvi. 24. To die, as a sacrifice for human guilt, was the great end of his life, and mission into our world. Thus was he represented by the goat that was sacrificed. Notice, how the figure was still further carried out,

II. *In the Goat which was kept alive.*

(1) Over the head of this goat the sins of the people were confessed, and on it symbolically laid. Thus Jesus came to be our surety and substitute. He placed himself between our guilt and ruin, and the law, with the penalty it denounced against us. Thus he really and virtually suffered in our stead, the "Just for the unjust," &c.

(2) Iniquities, transgressions, and sins, were confessed and laid on the scape-goat. Showing us here the extent of Christ's sacrifice for all kinds of guilt, whether arising from neglect of God's commands, or the wilful violation of his righteous prohibitions. In the sacrifice of Christ, there was an atonement for every kind of sin and for all grades and classes of sinners. We cannot conceive of a more heinous crime than that of murdering, with envious hate and malice, the Son of God. Yet the offer of mercy was first of all to be proclaimed to the populace of Jerusalem, showing the extensiveness of his atonement for all iniquity, transgression, and sin.

(3) The scape-goat was dismissed into the wilderness, with the imputed iniquity of the people upon it. Thus has Jesus truly borne our guilt away. He has obtained for a world of transgressors, the offer of pardon. For the polluted race of Adam, the means of purity. For condemned and dying sinners, the favor of God and the gift of eternal life. Notice.

III. *How the Benefits of the Scape-goat were conferred upon the People.*

Aaron was to lay both his hands upon the head of the scape-goat, and there confess all the sins of the people. How clearly does this show us the appointed medium by which we enjoy the salvation of Christ. (1) There must be implicit faith or confidence in his person and sacrifice. This was symbolically taught in the priest laying his hand upon the head of the live goat, ver. 21. Here we are to bring our sins, our misery, our helplessness, and place our entire confidence, our whole hope and trust, in the sacrifice of Christ. We are to place our whole burden of guilt and ruin where God's mercy has placed our help and salvation. And how worthy is Christ that all our dependence should be implicitly reposed upon him. (2) Faith in Jesus will ever be accompanied by sincere repentance. It will be connected with ingenuous confession, deep contrition, entire self-abasement, and self-loathing before God, with earnest forsaking of the paths of impenitence and sin.

APPLICATION.

1. We see here the connection between sin and death. Sin deserves death, exposes to death; where it is unforgiven, it will involve in eternal death. "The soul that sinneth," &c.

2. In Christ's death is the only real sacrifice for sin: "He died for our sins." What a glorious truth! How precious! How momentous!

3. Faith is the only medium of securing to the soul the benefits of that death. "He that believeth," &c.

XVIII.—THE BRAZEN SERPENT A TYPE OF CHRIST.

"And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up."—*John* iii. 14.

HERE we have the authority of Jesus for considering the brazen serpent as directly typical of himself. Without this divine testimony we might have been struck with the points of coincidence, and have legitimately illustrated the one by the other. Seeing Christ has done this for us, we approach the subject with peculiar confidence, and rejoice that the merciful provision of the serpent of brass was designed to point to that great act of mercy, by which God designed to save all believers through Christ Jesus.

I. *The appointment of the Serpent of Brass originated in the Mercy of God towards his rebellious Creatures.*

Ungratefully murmuring against the benign providence of God, he righteously visited their rebellion with the tokens of his displeasure. He sent among them fiery serpents, whose bite was fatal. Thus the wrath of Jehovah spread disease and death through the Israelitish camp. For this evil it is obvious there was no human remedy or help. Had not God mercifully interposed they would all have been consumed. But because his compassions failed not, he remembered them in their perishing state, and devised means for their deliverance.

Now we have here an exact and faithful representation of our fallen and ruined state by sin. Satan, the old, subtle, fiery, and deadly serpent, deceived our first parents. He tempted them to sin against God, and most awfully prevailed. Thus they became corrupt, guilty, and were condemned to die. Their condition was beyond human help. They had no skill to deliver themselves, or power to avoid the calamitous results of their transgression. The mercy of God, however, prevailed over all the worthlessness of the sinner, and from the boundlessness of his grace he provided a ransom and a deliverer. God so loved the dying Israelites as to appoint a remedy for their misery, and "He so loved the world," &c. John iii. 16. Notice,

II. *The striking Resemblance in the Instrument of Death and the Means of Recovery.*

A serpent inflicted the fatal wound, and a serpent of brass was the medium of cure By man sin entered into the world, "with all our woe." By Adam apostacy and guilt and ruin were introduced By the second Adam, the Lord from heaven, who became really man, made of a woman, &c., was the curse sustained the penalty paid, and salvation procured. Through man we became aliens, diseased, and exposed to death. By man also we were brought nigh, receive healing, and everlasting life. See this fully illustrated by the apostle Paul, Rom v. 12, to end.

III *Both Remedies were to be similarly exhibited.*

The serpent of brass was to be affixed to a pole and lifted up. Thus Jesus says, "As Moses *lifted* up the serpent, even so must the son of man be lifted up," &c. Now in the antitype we see this,

1. In the crucifixion of Christ.

He was lifted up on the cross. Lifted up there as the victim for sin. Lifted up there to die publicly as an atoning sacrifice for a guilty world. And this was necessary and essential. "It behooved Christ to suffer," &c.

2. In the lifting of Christ up by the preaching of the gospel.

Ministers are standard-bearers. It is theirs to go forth unfurling the banners of salvation. On this is the emblem of the Lamb slain. It is their great work to make known the cross of Christ to all the perishing children of men:—

"'Tis all their business here below,
To cry, Behold the Lamb."

IV *Both Remedies were effectual.*

The serpent of brass was an antidote to the bite of the fiery serpent. It saved the diseased and dying victims from death. It was invariably effectual. So Jesus, as God's remedy, is in every case efficacious to the salvation of the soul. He possesses all ability and all merit. None availed themselves of the remedy Moses lifted up and died, and none come to God by Christ and perish

"He is able, he is willing,
Doubt no more."

V. *The Application to both Remedies was the same.*

The virtue of the serpent of brass was derived by looking. Whoso "looked," lived. Now faith is the soul looking to Christ. It is the eye of misery and helplessness, directed to the all-meritorious and all-sufficient Saviour. In this looking or believing on Christ, the eye of desire and trust is withdrawn from every other object, and directed only to Christ. It is an act in which there can be no merit. An act which alone is effective, through the virtue there is in Christ. An act which displays the gratuitousness of salvation, the very opposite of merit, &c. An act which is followed invariably by the enjoyment of *life*. Whoso looked lived, and whoso believes is saved. Saved into spiritual life, and into the hope of eternal life in heaven Yet do we see a great *disparity* between these remedies. The one was but for a temporal malady, and imparted natural life; the other is for all the maladies of the soul, and relates to spiritual and everlasting life. The one was but a temporary remedy, suited to a limited period; the other is an abiding, and the only remedy throughout all time. The one was for the Israelitish camp; the other for the whole world

APPLICATION.

Learn,

1. Sin is a disease, painful, universal, and fatal. Have you felt it? Do you desire healing and deliverance?

2. Christ is the remedy. The one and only remedy. No other name. No other sacrifice, &c. A remedy gratuitous, free and infallible.

3. Faith is the only means of obtaining restoration. O look unto him and be saved. Look now, before the exhibition of Christ to you ceases. Look all of you, and thus your souls shall live.

XIX.—CHRIST TYPIFIED BY THE ARK OF THE COVENANT.

"The ark of the covenant."—*Heb.* ix. 4.

It is manifest that most of the furniture as well as the services of the tabernacle were of a typical character. Of these the ark of the covenant deserves to occupy a prominent place. We shall see in a variety of striking instances, how it distinctly pointed to Jesus, the substance of all the shadows connected with the ceremonial of the Mosaic economy. For a description of the ark read Ex. xxv. 10–17. Notice,

I. *The Ark typified the Dignity and Purity of Christ's Person*

The ark was made of *incorruptible wood*, was overlaid with *pure gold;* and had *crowns of gold* wrought round about it. Here is distinctly pointed out to us, (1) The holiness and incorruptibility of Christ's human nature. That holy thing conceived of the virgin. That which God had decreed should not be left in the sepulchre, and see corruption, Acts ii. 27. (2) The divinity of Jesus is represented by the fine gold. For not only did he possess human nature in its sinless condition, but he also had in connection with that, the divine na

ure of the Father. For in him dwelt "all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." (3) The encircling golden crowns typified the regal glory of Jesus. As King of kings and Lord of lords. And as these crowns encircled the ark, so they exhibited the eternity of Christ's authority and kingly power. We may just add here, that the shape of the ark might point out the perfection and completeness of Christ's person and work.

II. *The Contents of the Ark typified the Fulness and Work of Christ.*

1. In it were the two tables of the law. In Jesus these laws were embodied. He had them in his heart. He exemplified them in their fullest extent. "He magnified the law and made it honorable."

2. In it was the golden pot of manna. So in Jesus is the bread of life. He is the heavenly manna. "His flesh is meat indeed." He is the soul's satisfying portion. In him is treasured up provision for a starving world.

3. In it was Aaron's rod that budded. Typifying Christ's exalted and abiding priesthood. A priest forever. His priestly office will only terminate when the Mediatorial kingdom shall be delivered up to the Father, 1 Cor. xv. 24.

III. *The Achievements of the Ark typified the Victories of Christ.*

1. The ark opened a passage through Jordan to the promised land

So by Christ a way has been opened through the grave to the heavenly Canaan. He has gone forth before his people to prepare for them mansions of bliss and glory, John xiv. 1–3.

2. By the ark's compassing the walls of Jericho they were thrown down.

So Jesus by his divine power spoiled the powers of darkness, and he shall finally overthrow all the bulwarks of Satan's empire, and shall obtain a universal conquest over all his enemies. Wherever Christ is present in his preached gospel, there Satan's kingdom falls as lightning from heaven.

3 The presence of the ark broke the idol Dagon to pieces.

So shall the Saviour cast down all the idols of the heathen, and he alone shall receive the worship and homage of all the nations of the earth. Then shall be sung with universal gladness and delight, "The kingdoms" &c., Rev. xi. 15.

IV. *The Movements of the Ark typifies the Progress and Consummation of Christ's Kingdom.*

The ark was possessed by the Israelites, then it was in the hands of the Philistines, and finally it was laid up in Solomon's temple. Thus Christ was first preached to the Jews, the gospel kingdom was first set up among them, afterwards it was extended to the Gentiles; and when consummated, it shall consist of all nations, and kindreds, and tongues, and people, in the heavenly temple, there to be permanently glorious forever and ever.

The ark has long since perished with all that appertained to the first and second temples. Jesus is the imperishable ark, who abideth forever. The ark was destructive to the Philistines, and the men of Beth-shemesh perished for looking into it. Christ our gracious ark is acceptable to all, and the vilest are invited to approach freely, that they may not perish but have everlasting life

APPLICATION.

Learn,

1. The privilege you possess in having Christ the true ark with you. In it you have treasured up a fulness of all spiritual blessings.

2 With believing reverence draw near to it, and receive mercy, enjoy fellowship with God, and obtain grace to help you in every time of need.

3. Despisers of Christ must inevitably perish.

XX.—THE MERCY-SEAT A TYPE OF CHRIST.

"And over it the cherubim of glory shadowing the mercy-seat."—*Heb.* ix. 5.

"Set forth to be a propitiation (or mercy-seat."—*Rom.* iii. 25

It is clear from the apostle selecting this term, and applying it to Christ, that he considered it as typically shadowing him forth. We have already seen, in several particulars, how the ark itself was a type of Jesus; let us then call our attention to that which covered the ark, and which was most significantly styled the "mercy-seat." Notice,

I. *The Mercy-seat covered he Ark, in which were the Tables of the Law.*

Thus Jesus obeyed and honored all the

laws of God. He was subject to the law in all its moral claims and ceremonial institutions, and he was perfectly conformed to all its requirements. And it was necessary that he should do this, that the purity, justice, wisdom, and goodness of God might be vindicated. And also that by his perfect obedience, he might render to God an acceptable holy sacrifice for the sin of the world, Heb. vii. 26, 27. Thus redemption is based on the personal rectitude and obedience of Christ Jesus.

II. *The Mercy-seat was made of Pure Gold.*

This signifies both the purity and preciousness of Christ. Christ in his twofold nature was possessed of unsullied holiness. He was without spot. The holiness of Jehovah dwelt in him. But it also pointed out the preciousness of Christ. He is the peerless pearl, beyond all price. He enriches all who possess him, with the unsearchable riches both of grace and glory.

III. *Upon it were the Cherubim.*

Here was expressed the interest which holy angels take in the things of Christ, and which pertain to human redemption. Doubtless the apostle refers to this, where he says, "Which things the angels desire to look into," 1 Pet. i. 17. They take delight in all the ways and works of Jehovah, but it is probable that they feel interested in a peculiar degree in the mysteries of redeeming love. Here they obtain a fresh manifestation of Deity.

> "For God in the person of his Son,
> Has all his mightiest works outdone."

And the poet represents them as being filled with reverent awe and wonder, and says—

> "The first archangel never saw,
> So much of God before."

IV. *Here God was enthroned, and communed with Moses.*

"There will I meet with thee, and I will commune with thee from above the mercy-seat." See Ex. xxv. 17–23. How applicable the language of the apostle, "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself," 2 Cor. v. 19. Jesus was God manifested in the flesh. God with us. God holding intercourse with men. So that whoso had seen Christ, had also seen the Father John xiv. 9.

V. *Here God revealed his Mind and Will.*

Here God said, I will give thee of all things in "commandment unto the children of Israel," Ex. xxv. 22. Thus as God spake in divers manners in times past to the fathers by the prophets, "he hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son," Heb. i. 2. Jesus came to show us the will of his heavenly Father. He revealed the mind of God to man, unbosomed as it were the heart of Deity. Portions of truth had been published by prophets and holy men of old, but Jesus was the embodied truth of God. He came to be the light of the world. God says to all inquirers after life and blessedness, "Hear ye him." As the Messiah he came to show us all things, and to bring life and immortality to light, &c.

V. *At the Mercy-seat Prayer and Offerings were presented.*

So it is in and through Christ we have access to God. Whatsoever we ask it must be in his name. God is unapproachable to the guilty except through the person of his Son. He is the one mediator &c. Our persons and all our services must be presented to God, by and through Christ. Here too the mercy of God is alone dispensed. All our blessings descend to us through him. Here we find mercy and obtain grace to help in every time of need. We come to the Father by this way, and here God meets and blesses his believing people.

VII. *The Mercy-seat was to be approached through the sprinkling of Blood.*

"Then shall he kill the goat of the sin offering that is for the people, and bring his blood within the vail, and do with that blood, as he did with the blood of the bullock, and sprinkle it upon the mercy-seat and before the mercy-seat," Lev. xvi. 15. The apostle alludes to this, Heb. ix. 7, &c. Now here we are taught the supreme efficacy of Christ's blood. And that to this we must have especial regard in all our intercourse with Deity. That without shedding of blood there is no remission. That in Christ's blood we have redemption. And that our faith and hope must ever respect the blood of sprinkling, &c. The death of Christ is the great meritorious fact, on which we are to rest for pardon purity, peace, and everlasting life

APPLICATION.

1. As sinners we need a mercy seat

Guilty we are justly condemned and exposed to death. We have no merit or help in ourselves.

2. Christ is the only and the all-sufficient mercy-seat. There is no other. He is ever near. Full of efficacy. Almighty to save. Overflowing with tenderness and grace. His heart and arms open to a lost world.

3. Personal approach indispensable. We must draw near to him. In humble penitency. In unwavering faith. In earnest prayer.

XXI.—THE HIGH-PRIEST A TYPE OF CHRIST.

"A great High-priest."—*Heb.* iv. 14.

THE high-priests under the law were persons of high official dignity, and whose duties were of the most solemn and important character. At the head of those engaged in the sacred services of the tabernacle, or temple, they were greatly venerated by the people, and occupied a sort of midway station between the worshippers and the great Being unto whom their services were presented. It is clear that they were evident types of the expected Messiah; and that not only in the sacrifices offered, but also in the illustrious official person who entered into the holiest place with the blood of the victim, the pious worshipper was led to exercise faith and hope in the promised Saviour of the world.

The points of resemblance are numerous and striking: let us contemplate them with a direct view to our spiritual knowledge and comfort. This is seen,

I. *In their Personal Distinctions.*

(1) They were to be men of one specified tribe, to be free from bodily infirmities and defects; they were to avoid touching any dead body; and they were not to mourn for the dead as others. See Lev. xxi. 9–23. In this was very strikingly pointed out the perfection and holiness of Christ. Jesus, our high priest, "was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners," Heb. vii. 26. He had not one defect of character. He was free from every sinful infirmity, and reflected the perfectly holy and righteous image of God.

(2) As the high-priest too was fully devoted to sacred purposes, and did not engage in temporal affairs, so Christ was entirely engaged in the execution of his great sacerdotal calling. He lived to glorify his Father, and make known his mercy and grace to the miserable guilty sons of men.

II. *In their Calling and Appointment to this Office.*

To this great and holy calling, they were appointed by God, no man took this honor upon himself. So Jesus our high-priest was especially called and appointed of the Father. As such God is represented as "sending him forth," "delivering him up," "giving him for the life of the world." And Jesus ever acknowledged himself as his Father's "called" and "chosen servant." "I come," he said, "to do thy will, O God."

III. *In their Consecration to Office.*

In this, (1) They were to be washed with water, Ex. xxix. 4.

(2) They were to be anointed with oil, Ex. xxix. 7.

(3) A sacrifice was to be presented to God, v. 10.

In all these things we have a clear reference to Christ.

(1) Christ was consecrated to his great work by baptism

(2) Here too the anointing oil of the Holy Ghost descended upon him.

(3) And from this period to the moment he expired on the cross, he was a living sacrifice, presented to God for the salvation of the world. See Matt. iii. 13–17.

IV. *In The Sacerdotal Vestments, &c., which they wore.*

(1) They were to be clothed round about the loins with *fine white linen.* Expressive of the purity and righteousness of Christ's person and worth.

(2) They had the EPHOD, a costly and beautiful flowing garment, representing the rich graces, and heavenly beauties, of our great high-priest. In this was set, in precious stones, affixed to the shoulders, the names of the twelve tribes of Israel. Expressive of Christ bearing upon his shoulders all the interests of his spiritual kingdom, and sustaining all the concerns of his believing people.

(3) They had the BREASTPLATE. This was to be made of twelve costly and precious stones. These were to be set in four rows, so as to form an exact square. And this was affixed to the breast of the high-priest. In this was typified the love

of Christ to his people. That he had them on his heart. That they were distinctly recognised and known of him. And that they were his peculiar treasure and delight The form of the breastplate might signify the perfection and security of the church of Christ. In all Christ's offices and undertakings, he ever bears his people on his breast, indicating his tender and changeless love and solicitude for them.

(4) They had the URIM and THUMMIM. Of these it is difficult to speak. See Ex. xxviii. 30. But they signified "*Light and Perfection*," and it is supposed by and through these the priests obtained the will of God in all cases of judgment, and thus were preserved from error in all their decisions. Jesus Christ is the true light and perfection of all things. In him dwelt all the wisdom and knowledge of God. He spake most fully, and clearly, and infallibly the will of God. Through him we know all the will of God concerning us, and the love and mercy of God towards us.

(5) They had the MITRE and the CROWN. This was a kind of head-dress, made of blue silk and fine linen, in shape like a half-coronet. Beautified with a golden plate, on which was engraven, "Holiness to the Lord," Ex. xxviii. 36. Here we have represented the royal glory and absolute purity of Jesus. His dignity is unrivalled, his nature immaculate. His work is emphatically a holy work. He came to exhibit the holiness of God, and to redeem to himself and present before the Father a holy people to celebrate his praise forever. These were the chief distinctions in the garments of the high-priests. They typified Christ,

V. *In their Sacred Work.*

Now of these duties we refer only to the following:

1. They were to make an annual atonement for the people.

See Lev. xvi. 3–16. See this fully illustrated in the office and work of Christ, Heb. ix. 7–14.

2. They were to make intercession for the people.

With the blood of the annual sacrifice, they went into the holiest of all, and there presented their prayers to God for the people. Thus Jesus has entered into the holiest place of all, and with his own blood appears before God, ever living to make intercession for us.

3. They blessed the people in the name of the Lord.

So Jesus Christ, as our exalted high-priest, has obtained for all believers remission of sins, and all the gifts and graces of his Holy Spirit. He ascended and entered the holy place, that he might receive gifts for men, yea, even for the rebellious. But the high-priest,

4. Had to give judgment and decide all matters of controversy.

This power and authority Christ possesses. All judgment is committed to him. He is the one infallible Head and Lord of his church, and he will finally judge the world in righteousness, and give to every man according as his works shall be.

But the high-priests under the law were but frail men. Jesus is the immaculate Son of God. They were required to offer sacrifices first for themselves. But Christ had no sin. He was ever well pleasing to God. They had to repeat their sacrifices often · Jesus, by one sacrifice, has fully atoned for sin, and obtained salvation for every believer. They had their successors, for they did not continue by reason of death. Jesus is the one great *High-priest*, who ever liveth.

APPLICATION.

1 See in Christ the priest of heavenly dignity, and the sacrifice of infinite merit

2. Come to him with penitence and in the exercise of faith, that you may personally be interested in this great salvation.

3. There is no other sacrifice for sin, or hope for the sinner.

XXII.—THE PRIESTS TYPICAL OF BELIEVERS

"A royal priesthood."—1 *Pet.* ii. 9.

THE ancient priesthood passed away, when the Christian dispensation was established. Jesus is now the only priest, who has presented one great sacrifice for sin, and who "ever lives to make intercession for us." But in a spiritual sense, all believers are now priests, and as such they are designated by the apostle in our text, "A royal priesthood." The kingly and priestly offices were separate and distinct under the Mosaic economy. In Jesus they were united; he was a royal priest, or a "priest upon his throne." Believers

in Christ's right and by virtue of union to him, are made kings and priests unto God and the Father, &c. At present let us view the priesthood of the Christian, as typified by the priests under the law. They were so,

I. *In their Separation to the Priestly Calling.*

The priests were separated from the other tribes and devoted to the worship of God. Believers are called out of the world, and separated to the service of God. Hence they give themselves to the Lord. Present themselves as a living sacrifice, &c. Consecrate their service to the Lord. They cease to be of the world, and come out of it, bearing Christ's cross and following him. Besides, as the priests under the law were required to be sound in body and free from deformity, so none are of the spiritual priesthood but those who are sincere in heart, and fully devoted in life to the service of the Lord.

II. *In the Manner in which they entered upon their Office.*

They did this,

1. By being washed in pure water, Ex. xxix. 4.

A striking emblem of baptism, by which we commence our Christian profession, and put on the Saviour before men. To this doubtless the apostle refers, "Let us draw near," &c., Heb. x. 22.

2. By being clothed with the sacerdotal vestments.

Without dwelling minutely on these, we may observe that believers are clothed with that holiness which is likened to fine linen. That they wear the girdle of truth, —the robe of salvation,—the breastplate of righteousness,—and the shoes of the preparation of the gospel of peace. On their heads too they have, as their mitre and helmet, the hope of salvation.

3. By being anointed with consecrating oil.

In this was typified the communication of the Holy Spirit. Compare Ex. xxix. 7, with 2 Cor. i. 21, and 1 John ii 20.

4. By the whole being ratified through the blood of sacrifices, (Ex. xxix. 10,) with which also they were hallowed for their sacred service.

In this we are distinctly led to behold the acceptance of the believer, through the merit of Jesus Christ, the great sacrifice for sin; and the application of his blood to the sanctifying of the conscience before God.

III. *In the Duties which devolved upon them.*

They were,

1. To offer sacrifices, Heb. v. 1.

The nature and manner of doing this was revealed to them by the Lord. Thus also do believers present their sacrifices to God. They present themselves as a living sacrifice. "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit," &c. They present the sacrifice of prayer and thanksgiving, with that of benevolence, and liberality, and mercy, with which God is well pleased, Ps. li. 16, cvii. 22; Heb. xiii. 15, 16.

2. They were to offer intercession for their fellow-worshippers.

And this duty belongs to the Christian priesthood. See 1 Tim. ii. 1. They are to pray one for another, James v. 13, 18.

3. They were to instruct and bless the people.

To feed the people with knowledge. To explain and enforce the will of the Lord, Mal. ii. 7. And in the name of the Lord to bless the people. The Christian priest is, in like manner, to diffuse abroad the light of the gospel, holding forth the word of life, and by his life and influence to be a blessing to those around him. God says of such, "I have blessed thee and will make thee a blessing," "Ye are the salt of the earth," &c.

4. They were to carry on the services of the tabernacle, and to keep the fire continually burning on the altar.

In this too we behold the trust which God has committed to his church. It is for his spiritual priests to maintain the ordinances of the gospel in all their purity, and to convey them down to posterity. They are to maintain the celebration of Christian worship, the preaching of the word of life, and to offer up their united prayers for the extension of the church, and the salvation of the world. Consider

IV. *The Privileges which they enjoyed.*

1. Their support was ordained of God and fully provided for them.

Certain portions of the sacrifices were to be for Aaron and his sons, Lev. ii. 10 The great Sacrifice for sin, provides all his spiritual priests with "meat indeed." Christ in all his fulness is to be received for the support and strengthening of the soul. Jesus said, "Verily, verily, I say

unto you, except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you," John vi. 53.

2. Their office was one of peculiar dignity and honor.

Separated from secular pursuits. They were dedicated to a holy calling, and raised to occupy as it were a sacred place between God and the people. This honor have all God's saints. They are a people sanctified to the Lord. His chosen servants. The Lord's delight and heirs to his eternal kingdom and glory.

3. They had more direct intercourse with Deity.

Through the blood of the sacrifices, by their offering of incense, and their intercessions, they came immediately before the Lord. Of believers the apostle says, "Through him (Christ) we both have access, by one Spirit unto the Father," Eph. ii. 18. So also, "Having boldness to enter into the holiest of all," &c., Heb. x. 19.

APPLICATION.

1. Let believers rejoice in their high and heavenly calling. "Unto him who hath loved us," &c.

2. With fervor and delight attend to the duties of their sacred avocation. Especially never allow the fire of devotion to expire on the altar of their hearts.

3. To have respect in all things to the great sacrifice for sin. Here alone is merit, and righteousness, and acceptance with God.

4. To anticipate the more perfect services of the heavenly temple.

XXIII.—THE TABERNACLE A TYPE OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH.

"I will abide in thy tabernacle forever: I will trust in the covert of thy wings."—*Ps.* lxi. 4.

Our text contains the expression of David's devoted attachment to the tabernacle of the Lord. Among the very numerous excellencies which distinguished the psalmist, this was one peculiarly prominent. He loved the house of the Lord, and desired above all other things to dwell in it all the days of his life, that he might behold the beauty of the Lord, and inquire in his temple. Here he affirms the resolution of his soul, "I will abide in thy tabernacle,' &c. Is it not our duty and privilege and interest to cherish a spirit like that of David? Our souls ought to be glad when we are invited to go up to the house of the Lord. Here God manifests himself, &c. Here we have the rich provisions of his grace. Here we behold the divine glory, and have fellowship with God and the excellent of the earth. But let us consider the subject typically, and view the ancient tabernacle as a symbol of the church of God on earth. The tabernacle was a spacious moveable tent, created for the celebration of Jehovah's worship. It was built in the time of Moses, was of divine origin and construction, and the cost of the materials, &c., was provided by the voluntary liberality of the people. In many things it very much typified the person of Christ. In some things the heavenly state. But more fully and clearly it was a type of the church of Christ on earth.

1. It was so in its divine origin and construction.

God called for its erection. It was not of human devising. And in all things it was made according to the pattern which God showed to Moses in the mount. Such too is the church of God. A spiritual house or tabernacle formed for Jehovah's praise, and in all things fixed and established by the infallible wisdom of God. Not an angel would interfere. The plan is perfect as its author. The materials the order, and their use, are all settled by the unerring skill of God.

2. It was so in its design.

It was to be the depository of holy things. The place of holy exercises. The scene of holy manifestations. Here was the ark, the mercy-seat, the oracles, the golden pot of manna. Here sacrifices were offered. Incense burned. Praises and supplications presented. Here the glory of God was seen. The blessings of his love imparted. How truly applicable to the church of Christ. Here is deposited all the riches of his grace, &c.

3. It was so in its costliness and worth. The most valuable materials were employed,—gold, silver, and precious stones. Herein we see shadowed forth, &c., preciousness of believers, the true and only materials of which the church of Christ is constructed. See 1 Cor. iii. 12. All the members of Christ's church are precious, but in different degrees of value; 2 Tim ii. 20. All the materials are blood-bought

—highly prized of God and endued with immortality.

4. It was so in the voluntary spirit of those who erected it.

Ex. xxxv. 4, 5, 20, 21, xxxvi. 56. What an astonishing instance of zeal, and liberality, and devotedness to the service of God. In this we have a typical resemblance of the voluntary character of all those spiritual services which God will accept. In Christianity our profession, our baptism, our regard to all the ordinances and duties must be voluntary, &c. "We are to present our bodies and give ourselves to the Lord," &c., serve him with a cheerful and willing heart.

5. It was so in its moveableness from place to place.

Notwithstanding the great excellence of the tabernacle, yet it was easily taken down, and went in all sojournings. Now God has ever had his church in the world, yet not always in the same locality. Once a flourishing church in Jerusalem, Corinth, &c. . It moved from the eastern to the western world. It has never been fixed and stationary, but ever changing and in motion.

6. It typified the church as it was superseded by the temple at Jerusalem.

So the church of Christ on earth shall be consummated, and all its members be removed to the celestial temple in heaven. Of that temple John had a sublime vision. Read Rev. xx. Such are the chief points of typical resemblance. Notice,

II. *The Psalmist's pious Resolution.*

"I will abide in the tabernacle," &c. Now what does this imply and include?

1. That he was already a resident in it.

No abiding without first being in it. He had chosen it as the place of his spiritual abode, and "Blessed are they who dwell in thy house," &c. The Christian has been born into the church and kingdom of Christ. He lives in it; it is his spiritual home.

2. It implied pre-eminent attachment to it.

He was not weary of it. Not indifferent to it. Full of love to it. It was nearer his heart than his own palace. He preferred it to his chief good. How dear is the church of Christ to the believer. How he loves the assembly of the saints. He prays for her peace, and labors for her prosperity. It is his banqueting house, &c., and he had rather be a doorkeeper &c.

A desire to enjoy its meetening influences for the heavenly state.

Communion with God on earth will prepare for communion above. Plants of righteousness, we must bear fruit till we are meet for being transplanted to the paradise above. O yes, there is a delightful nearness and connection between the church on earth and the church above! Like the holy and the most holy place. So says the Christian poet,—

> "The holy to the holiest leads,
> From thence our spirits rise," &c.

It is desirable to die in visible union with Christ and his people. Well may we say, "I will." &c. Wherefore should we forsake it? Where shall we go &c. Observe, he also resolves to trust in the shadow of the divine wings. God's house is his joy, and God's outspread wings his defence. Happy the people in such a case, &c.

APPLICATION.

1. How satisfied the Christian should be with his portion as a citizen of Zion. A member of God's family.

2. Improve your privileges. Be diligent, devout.

3. Promote its welfare. Do all you can by your example, influence, &c.

XXIV.—JERUSALEM A TYPE OF THE CHURCH OF CHRIST.

"But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all."—*Gal.* iv. 26

The apostle is evidently contrasting the two dispensations. That of the law and the gospel. That of Moses and Christ. That of the ancient Zion and Jerusalem, with that spiritual New Testament dispensation, the Jerusalem from above, the mother of all believers, whether Jews or Gentiles. Between these dispensations there is indeed a striking contrast. One an economy of terror, of law, and legal ceremonies; the other a dispensation of love, grace, and spiritual freedom and rest. But we now design to consider the ancient Jerusalem in its typical representation of the church of Christ.

I. *It was the City of the Divine Choice.*

The Lord chose Zion; he said, "Here

will I dwell," &c, Ps. cxxxii. 13–18. Now the church is the choice of the Lord; it contains the united congregation of his saints, those who have been called by his gospel, who have believed in his Son, and who have been the living partakers of his heavenly grace. Over these God rejoiceth. With these he has his delights. Unto these he manifests himself as he doth not unto the world. Jesus says of each of these, "If a man love me he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him," &c., John xiv. 23. See 1 Pet. i. 23, 24.

II. *It was the City of Divine Rule and Authority.*

Here God made known his laws and judgments. Here he deposited his living oracles. His holy statutes. Here he revealed his will, and recorded his blessed word. And by these the inhabitants of Jerusalem were to be governed. Obedience to these secured the favorable tokens of God's love and favor. So in the new Jerusalem of his church. Here he has revealed his holy will, not by the oracle, or over the material mercy-seat, but by his own Son, and by making his living church the pillar and ground of truth. By depositing within it the doctrines, and commandments, and ordinances of the gospel. And the divine presence and favor is only secured, by unswerving fidelity to the charge with which God has intrusted her.

III. *Jerusalem was the City of Divine Services*

Here met the tribes of Israel, who came to worship before the Lord. Here were presented the sacrifices and the offerings of the people. Here God was worshipped and adored Here the voice of prayer and praise was heard in God's holy temple. Here the religious festivals were celebrated, and God honored in his sacred institutions. Such is the church of Christ, the Jerusalem, &c. Here those who have believed, and are of the saved, are united together, in the holy bonds of fellowship and love. Here they meet to observe all things their divine head has commanded them, and to continue "steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in breaking of bread and in prayers," &c., Acts ii. 41.

IV. *Jerusalem was the City of Divine Blessings.*

"The Lord loved the gates of Zion," &c. His especial love and care was directed to it. His providential benignity surrounded it. The Lord was the keeper and protector of the holy city. Within it he poured down the blessings of his grace and caused his favor to dwell, even life for evermore. See his gracious engagements and promises, Ps. cxxxii. 15, &c. So God pre-eminently blesses his spiritual Zion. Unto his people he gives exceedingly great and precious promises. They are blessed with the unsearchable blessings of his grace. With all the fulness of his love. With all the blessings of providence and grace. God supplies all their need. Defends from all their enemies, and keeps and saves unto eternal life.

V. *Jerusalem was a City of distinguished Immunities and Privileges.*

It was an honor to have been born in her. Her sons were freemen of the most favored city under heaven. Her inhabitants had numerous opportunities of enjoying religious services; they had the presence of the priests, and teachers of the law of God. "Happy were the people in such a case," &c. Still greater and more precious the immunities and privileges of the people of God. They enjoy spiritual liberty, have exalted titles, and possess immunities of the most glorious and heavenly character. Access to God's gracious throne. The sweet fellowship of his Holy Spirit. Delightful seasons of refreshing from the divine presence, and experimental overflowings of that peace which passeth all understanding.

APPLICATION.

1. Are we the citizens of the Jerusalem from above? Have we been born into her? Born from above? Born of water and the Spirit? Do we possess the spirit of her heavenly inhabitants?

2. How great the responsibility of such. It is theirs to exhibit the glory of divine grace, in calling and saving them, by a conversation which becometh the gospel of Christ. "To show forth his praises," &c. To pray for her peace and to labor for her prosperity. To display the spirit of love and harmony towards all the citizens, and to yield loyal subjection and hearty obedience to Christ the rightful Lord and King

3. Unlike the earthly Jerusalem, she shall never become a prey to her enemies Her walls shall never be cast down, nor her streets become waste. "The gates of hell shall never prevail against her"

XXV.—SOLOMON'S TEMPLE A TYPE OF THE HEAVENLY STATE.

"And the house, when it was in building, was built of stone made ready before it was brought thither," &c.—1 *Kings* vi. 7

We recently contemplated the tabernacle as a striking type of Christ's visible church, and one of the typical resemblances was, that it was finally superseded by the temple of Solomon. Thus the church of Jesus on earth is preparatory to the church above. This is the union of good yet imperfect beings; that of the perfect and the holy. This is distinguished by mutability; that by its fixed, abiding, and eternal unchangeableness. The glory of that holy state we must die to realize and enjoy; and in its magnificence, and purity, and bliss, it will infinitely surpass all we ever saw or heard, or it ever entered into the heart of man to conceive. In treating of the heavenly state all expressions and images must necessarily fail. But let us look at some of the points of resemblance between Solomon's temple and what is revealed of the heavenly world. We notice,

I. *That it typified Heaven in the Costliness of its materials.*

See in reference to this, ch. v. 17, and vi. 21–30. One part of the temple, the holy of holies, was overlaid with gold to the value of six hundred talents of gold, or the immense sum of four millions, three hundred thousand pounds of our sterling money. Of the entire expense we can form no probable idea. The spiritual, celestial temple above is not formed of earthly material stones, however precious. It is not overlaid with fine gold. It is constructed of spiritual beings. The souls of the redeemed. To estimate the value of these is beyond an angel's power. A soul outweighs in worth the material world. Jehovah's mandate brought suns, and systems, and worlds into being. He spake, and it was done. He commanded, and it stood fast. But the outlay connected with the erection of the heavenly temple involved the gift of Christ, the impoverishing of heaven, the humiliation and sacrifice of God's only Son. "Not redeemed with corruptible things," &c.—but with the 'precious blood of Christ." It typified the heavenly state,

II. *In its Magnificence and Extent.*

It was built according to the wisdom and skill of God. In every respect its appearance was that of grandeur and magnificence. In form and size it was an exact square one thousand, four hundred, and sixty feet long on each side. Being considerably above a mile in circumference. Every thing, however, like verbal description must be inadequate, to give you even a faint idea of its glory and extent. How much the grandeur and vastness of the heavenly kingdom. If a building erected by an earthly monarch should be so vast and magnificent, how splendid and glorious will that temple be, of which God is the immediate architect, and which is to show forth his glory throughout the ages of eternity. "In my Father's house are many mansions," &c.

III. *In the Variety of the Materials of which it was composed.*

Here were various kinds of wood and precious stones, and silver and gold. Many of these materials were brought from afar. How exactly the antitype agrees with this The heavenly temple shall be formed of countless numbers of believers. A multitude which no man can number. Persons of every age, and clime, and country, and tongue. Jews and gentiles, bond and free; all of whom shall unitedly constitute the celestial temple of the Lord. The typical analogy is seen,

IV. *In the Preparation of these Materials before they were brought together.*

To this our text especially refers. "It was built of stone made ready before it was brought thither." Now of these materials observe,

1. They were originally unfit for such a use.

In their native state, a part of the rocky quarry. Such was the original condition of every glorified spirit. They were once afar off. "Dark, polluted, hard, in a state of nature, and unfit for the glory of God." See Isaiah li. 1.

2. They were made fit by a process of preparation.

Separated from the mass, hewn out squared, and polished; each fit for its proper place in the erection. Thus the materials of the celestial temple are "made ready." They are brought out of their natural sinful state. Renewed by the spirit of divine grace. Qualified for certain duties and stations of usefulness. And progressively polished by the sanctifying influences of the Holy Spirit. Until they

possess a "meetness," or adaptation, for the inheritance of the saints in light.

This process of preparation was before the stones were brought to the building.

When brought they were ready to be fixed, and to form their part of the wall of the temple. So that there was not heard the sound of axe or hammer, while the house was in building. So it is with the erection of the heavenly temple. All the process of preparation is confined to this world, and to time. Here the hammer of the word is employed and heard. "Is not my word a hammer," &c. Here conviction is produced. Here the cry of anxious desire is heard. Here the bemoanings of contrite spirits, and reformation of life is witnessed. In short, sin is forgiven. New nature imparted. And the soul made fully holy and fit for heaven here. No heralds of mercy above. No sanctuaries. No baptisteries. No providential sanctifying dispensations. The souls are made fit before they are brought there. This is illustrated by the wise virgins. By the man with the wedding garment. By the ripe grain fit for the garner, &c. Observe the typical resemblance,

V. *In the glorious Design of its Erection.*

1. The happiness of human beings.

Here they were to have privileges and blessings worthy of God to bestow. Here they were to be exalted to the enjoyment of the highest and loftiest exercises. Here enjoy visible communion with the divine majesty of heaven and earth. God thus magnified and blessed his people. And the celestial temple is one of exalted enjoyment. The whole stupendous fabric formed of redeemed spirits is vocal with melody and joy. Here is the fountain of bliss and pleasures for evermore. Here the saints enjoy close and uninterrupted fellowship with God forever.

2. The manifestation of Jehovah's glory.

God filled the temple with the cloud of his presence, the symbol of his glory. Heaven will be the scene of the brightest display of the glory of God. Here it would overwhelm us. "No man can see my face (says Jehovah) and live." On the mount the disciples were overwhelmed with the transfigured appearance of the Saviour. At his resurrection, the guards fell down as dead men. But in the celestial temple God's glory shall be fully revealed. His face shall illumine it He shall be its sun. And the saints shall behold it, and live, in unutterable ecstasy forever. And here we see the disparity:—Solomon's temple was after all earthly and mutable, and finally passed away the celestial temple is heavenly, immutable and everlasting.

Here, were the sacrifices of beasts and the services of dying priests; above, there are the services of the saints, who are all priests, and who, through the sacrifice of Christ, will be acceptable to God forever and ever.

APPLICATION.

Learn,

1. The benevolent and glorious design of God, in erecting a spiritual temple of redeemed souls, to show forth his praises through all the ages of eternity.

2. Do we personally enter into this great design? Are we anticipating a place and portion in his heavenly kingdom? Have we a good hope, to which we have been begotten, by faith in the resurrection of Christ from the dead?

3. Are we undergoing the preparatory process? Are we being made ready by the gracious means which God has appointed? How anxious, and diligent, and fervent we should be concerning this. Forget it not, that all which is prerequisite must be done and obtained here. Then let it be our wisdom and business to "Give diligence," &c., 2 Peter i. 10, 11.

XXVI.—THE JEWISH NATION TYPICAL OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH

"A chosen generation. A holy nation. A peculiar people."—1 *Peter* ii 9.

THE apostle here has obvious reference to the Jewish people as a type of the Christian church. And if the various sacrifices and services were typical of Christ and the Gospel, we need not be surprised to find a striking analogy between the Jewish nation and the spiritual kingdom of the Saviour. The apostle uses three terms in the text, which we shall endeavor to illustrate in their typical signification.

I. *The Church of Christ is a chosen Generation.*

God selected Abraham and called him to be his servant, and promised that he would make of him "a great nation," and said, "I will bless thee and make thy

same great, and thou shalt be a blessing," &c., Gen. xii. 1–3. We enter not into the principles of this choice; we know not why and wherefore God made the Jews his chosen generation; but, he did so, although it is evident in this choice Jehovah had respect to an election to privileges, and which did not secure, irrespective of faith and obedience, either his favor or everlasting life. See Heb. iii. 7, 19, iv. 1. Thus believers are called and chosen to the fellowship of the gospel. In their collective capacity they are the delight of God. The objects of his love, the recipients of his blessings, a generation to show forth the praises and glory of God. They are chosen "through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus," 1 Peter i. 2.

II. *They are a Holy Nation.*

A nation distinct and separated to God, as were the Jews, the seed of Abraham. Now we shall find a striking analogy in the following particulars, between the Jewish nation and the church of Jesus.

1. As a nation originally they had no supreme ruler or king but Jehovah.

Theirs was a theocracy, and their laws were all divine. The spiritual nation of believers has no head and king but Jesus. He is the head over all things to his church. The only king in Zion.

2. As a nation they were distinctly separated from all other people.

So the church is a distinct spiritual nation or kingdom, not of this world. Redeemed out of it, and separated manifestly from it. "Ye are not of the world," &c.

3. As a nation they had their especial religious laws and ordinances.

So the church of Jesus has the revealed laws of the Son of God. He has given her his holy word, and established within her holy ordinances and institutions.

4. As a nation they enjoyed many immunities and blessings.

God was their kind benefactor, guardian, and friend. So the church of Christ possesses distinguished privileges and favors. The Most High dwells within her. He is constantly imparting the riches of his grace. And he is as a wall of fire to his Zion, and their glory in the midst. He watches and keeps his holy hill in perfect safety.

III *They are a peculiar People.*

That is, distinct and differing from others. Now many things which were peculiar to the Jews we have adverted to. But we may add, of God's spiritual people,

1. They are the subjects of peculiar love.

"What manner of love hath the Father," &c. "Herein is love," &c.

2. They are peculiar in their experience.

Passed from death to life. Plucked as brands from the fire. Brought out of vassalage, &c. New creatures in Christ Jesus. Much about them paradoxical. Alive, yet dead. Rich, yet poor. Sorrowful, yet rejoicing. Princes, yet beggars. Weak, yet strong. As nothing, yet heirs of God, and possessing all things. Dying daily, yet having a sure hope of life and immortality.

3. As a people they were distinguished by their peculiar costume, habits, and language.

So the disciples of Christ are a spiritual nation, influenced by spiritual principles, distinct in their appearance by the graces and fruits of the Spirit, and have a holy conversation and speech, unlike that which prevails in the world. And this leads us to the next particular.

4. They have peculiar enjoyments.

Food to eat, of which others are ignorant. Sweet visitations from God. God manifests himself unto them, &c. They have peculiar peace, which passeth all understanding. Peculiar joy, with which strangers cannot intermeddle; joy unspeakable and full of glory. Bright providences, and glowing hopes of future blessedness.

APPLICATION.

Learn,

1. Believers only, whose faith worketh by love, and produces obedience to God, belong to this chosen generation, &c. Let us not depend upon the logical peculiarities or doctrinal notions, and from these infer our character and condition. The safe test is living, purifying faith. "Dost thou believe in the Son of God?"

2. Let such walk worthy of their high and heavenly calling. As the chosen, holy and peculiar people of God, let their conversation and spirit honor God, and practically recommend religion to those around them. "So let your light shine before men," &c.

XXVII.—CHRIST TYPIFIED BY THE CITIES OF REFUGE.

"Who have fled for refuge."—*Heb.* vi. 18.

IT is clear that the apostle, when uttering these words, had especial reference to the cities of refuge, and the security the manslayer had by fleeing to them. A full description of these cities is given in the book of Numbers, xxxv. 9–28; and Joshua, xx. Their appointment was designed for the security of those who accidentally or unwittingly slew a man, and who were exposed to death by the next of kin to the deceased, as the avenger of blood. Now observe,

I. *Every Sinner is justly exposed to Death.*

The penalty of transgression is death. The soul that sinneth shall die. All whose guilt and transgressions are uncancelled, unforgiven, are condemned already, and the wrath of God abideth on them. Natural death is the result of sin. In death and trespasses all ungodly men are now involved, so as to be dead while they live. But the justice of God will punish, with eternal death, all who remain in final impenitence and unbelief. And this is the condition of all mankind. All countries, all classes, all degrees of sinners are in the way of death. Pursued by the righteous AVENGER of blood, who will cast the wicked into hell, with all the nations that forget God.

II. *God hath appointed Jesus as the Refuge for condemned Sinners.*

He came that men might not perish, but have everlasting life. He came not to destroy men's lives, but to save them. Now in this, he was strikingly typified by the cities of refuge.

1. In their number we are reminded of the sufficiency of Christ.

There were six of these cities. Doubtless amply sufficient for the cases which might require them. Jesus is the *sufficient* Saviour of all men. In him is room for the whole world. Merit, mercy, and willingness, for every child of man.

2. In their diversified localities we see the accessibility of Christ.

These cities were placed in various parts of the land, so as to be near to every quarter, and accessible to the inhabitants throughout. Here we see at once pointed out to us, the nearness of Christ to every portion of the family of Adam. Throughout our wide world, in every region and city and spot tenanted by a sinner, is Christ near at hand, and not afar off. All the world may have ready access to Christ, and live.

3. In the spacious well-directed roads to the cities of refuge, we are reminded of the free, full, and plain declarations of the gospel of Christ.

The cities were to be on distinct elevations, so as to be seen afar off. The roads to them were to be wide and unobstructed. Finger-posts were to be placed at every turning, on which were to be inscribed Refuge! Thus every aid was afforded to the manslayer in his flight for mercy. How truly does this show us the very spirit of the gospel. Here the way of mercy is fully revealed. The mode of salvation clearly detailed. The most gracious directions given. And every facility afforded to the soul who is inquiring what he must do to be saved.

4. In the signification of the names of the cities, we also perceive the glorious excellency of Christ.

One of these cities was called "KEDESH," which signifies "HOLY." Jesus is the Holy One of God. His person is holy. His work is holy. He redeems and saves men to holiness. Another was called "SHECHEM," which signifies "SHOULDER," representing Christ as bearing the sins and burdens of the sinner. "He hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows." The whole church of God is sustained by him and rests upon him. Another was called "HEBRON," signifying "FELLOWSHIP." Thus Christ is the medium and ground of fellowship between God and men, and between the whole body of believers. In Christ we become the sons of God, and members one of another. Another was called "BEZER," which signifies a "STRONGHOLD." Christ is often thus described. He is our refuge, our fortress, and a stronghold in the day of trouble. In him we are more secure than if surrounded by a munition of rocks. Another of the cities was called "RAMOTH," which signifies "EXALTATION." Jesus is the exalted Son of God. The Prince of life The Lord of glory. After the work of his humiliation and sorrow, God raised him from the dead and exalted him to the right hand of the majesty on high. He is exalted by the uplifting of the cross, in the hearts and

supreme ove of all his people, and shall be exalted in the songs of the redeemed forever and ever. The name of the last city of refuge was "GOLAN," which signifies "EXULTATION," or "JOY." Christ is the joy and rejoicing of his people. His gospel is the message of joy. His kingdom is not only righteousness and peace, but joy in the Holy Ghost. He is the joy of his church on earth, and the ecstasy of the heavenly world.

5. In the deliverance of the manslayer we see typified the salvation which is in Christ Jesus.

Within the city he was safe. Death was averted. Provision was made for him. But it was necessary that he should abide, at least until the death of the high-priest. Now, by believing repentance, the sinner flees to Christ, and becomes interested in his all-extensive merit and saving benefits. But he must be *in* Christ. And he must *abide* in him, John xv. 1–7. Thus he shall be delivered from present condemnation, and from eternal death. In Christ is ample provision for his comfort, safety, and well-being.

APPLICATION.

From this subject,

1. We see the awful misery and peril of the careless sinner.

2. The absolute necessity of repentance towards God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. And how necessary that this should be prompt and immediate. Without delay, seeing that the avenger of blood is pursuing every sinner. "Agree with thine adversary quickly," &c.

3. How urgently should ministers make known the terrors of the Lord and persuade men.

4. How happy are those who are delivered from the power of Satan, and have been brought to enjoy the forgiving love of God. Within the city of refuge, all their interests are secure both for time and eternity.

XXVIII.—THE GOSPEL ERA TYPIFIED BY THE YEAR OF JUBILEE.

"To preach the acceptable year of the Lord"—*Luke* iv. 19

THE Saviour had just returned from his baptism and consecration to his great mission. Entering into the synagogue at Nazareth, there was given unto him the roll of Isaiah, from which he read a portion of that prophecy, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me," &c., Isa. lxi. 1, &c. This beautiful passage was appropriated to himself, and therein he taught the people, that he was in truth the long-predicted and long-expected Messiah. The last sentence of the scripture which he quoted, evidently refers to the year of jubilee, and thus he gives to the era of the gospel the direct application of that celebrated and joyous season. Let us contemplate the year of jubilee, so that we may discover the most striking typical features which it presented.

I. *The Year of Jubilee was appointed as a period of Mercy and Joy to the Afflicted and Poor of the People of Israel.*

This was evidently its broad and comprehensive character. Such evidently is the gospel era, a period of the full revelation of the mercy and love of God to our world. A year of glad tidings, and of great joy to all people. Its great design and end, is the well-being and happiness of the human race.

II. *The Year of Jubilee was a Period fixed and appointed by God.*

God directed that they "should hallow the fiftieth year and proclaim liberty throughout all the land, unto all the inhabitants thereof; it shall be a jubilee to you," Lev. xxv. 10, &c. Thus God fixed and appointed the gospel dispensation, and to it the prophets bare witness; to this day of salvation Abraham looked, and for it kings waited; and John at length, as the immediate herald of Christ, announced the approach of the jubilee, or gracious reign of the Son of God.

III. *The Year of Jubilee was ushered in on the great Day of Atonement.*

This was the most sacred day in the Jewish calendar. On this day a bullock was slain as a sin-offering, a ram as a burnt-offering, and the scape-goat symbolically bare away the sins of the people On this day the mercy-seat was sprinkled And the priest in the holiest place interceded for the people, and then came forth to bless them in the name of the Lord. Now the whole of these services had a distinct reference to the death and sacrifice of Jesus Christ. They had no virtue or value but as they typified the atonement

made by Christ. And that atonement is the basis of the gospel dispensation. There can be no tidings of mercy and salvation to the sinner but through the death of the Lord Jesus Christ. "Thus it was written and thus it behooved Christ to suffer," &c., Luke xxiv. 46.

IV. *The Jubilee was announced with Trumpets and with Acclamations of great Joy.*

The trumpet was to sound to all the people throughout the land. To this doubtless the psalmist refers, when he says, "Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound," Ps. lxxxix. 15. Thus was the gospel introduced into our world. Angels from heaven sang with rapture, while they announced the birth of the Saviour of man. Jesus and his disciples went everywhere through the land, proclaiming peace and joy to the people. And the Christian ministry is designed to convey the life-giving sound through all the world, and to every creature.

V. *The Jubilee conferred great Privileges and Blessings on the People.*

1. It was associated with abundant provision.

The promise was, "that the land should bear fruit," and that they should "eat their fill, and dwell in safety," Lev. xxv. 19. Now the gospel era is one of overflowing plenty. It is compared to a great supper. To a royal feast. See Isa. xxvi. 6–8; Matt. xxii. 1–4.

2. It proclaimed liberty to captives and the opening of the prison doors to those that were bound.

The bond-servant was now free, and universal liberty prevailed through all the land, Lev. xxv. 39. The gospel also makes known to the slaves of sin and the captives of the wicked one, emancipation and freedom. O yes, Jesus frees all who come to him from the galling yoke of hellish bondage, and introduces them into the liberty of the sons of God. Whom the Son makes free, they are free indeed. See Rom. vi. 22.

3. It provided for the remission of debts.

Those who were waxen poor, and could not pay their creditors, were on this year, to be discharged from the obligation. Now this is the great blessing announced in the gospel, "Forgiveness of sin." Jesus came to forgive sin. He freely forgave every earnest applicant in the days of his flesh And he is exalted a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance and remission of sin. Acts xiii. 38; Luke xxiv. 47.

4. It restored forfeited possessions.

Estates and possessions mortgaged now returned to their original owners. See Lev. xxv. 23, 24. Here again we behold the clear application to the design and spirit of the gospel. It announces to us the restoration of all we have lost through the introduction of sin into our world. Or rather it gives us more precious and abiding blessings in their place.

> "In Christ the tribes of Adam boast,
> More blessings than their father lost."

We regain the love and favor of God, the fountain of every other blessing. We regain our sonship and likeness to God. We regain a heavenly renewed nature. We regain a title to glory, and honor, and riches, and dominion, in the heavenly paradise. We become "heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ," Rom. viii. 17. Oh the grandeur, the sublimity, the eternity of the inheritance which is made known to us in the gospel!

5. The year of jubilee was one of freedom from toil.

It was a year of festivity and rest, Lev. xxv. 11, 12. The land overflowed with plenty, and richly spread its fulness before all the people. Such is the gospel dispensation. A period wherein the graciousness of God is richly seen, in the fulness and freeness of the promises of his love. No painful rites, no tedious ablutions, no expensive sacrifices, no heavy yoke of observances, all the institutions of the gospel are easy, simple, gratuitous, and gracious. "The law (with all its ceremonies) was given by Moses," but "grace and truth came by Jesus Christ."

APPLICATION.

1. Learn the privileges and blessings of that dispensation under which we live.

2. The importance of a personal and practical improvement of them.

3. Despisers must necessarily be miserable, and finally perish.

METAPHORS.

XXIX.—GOD THE FATHER OF HIS PEOPLE.

"Will be a Father unto you."—2 *Cor* vi. 18.

JEHOVAH is the author or fountain of all things. All creatures derived their existence from him, and for his pleasure and glory they were created. He is the father of the Saviour. The father of angels. The father of the whole human family. But our text refers to him as the spiritual father of his people. As the father of our natural being, we are brought under his government, become the subjects of his providential care, and are amenable to his righteous laws. But in our unrenewed state he cannot behold us with delight. The carnal mind is enmity to him, our wills and hearts and lives are opposed to his will and equitable authority, and by disobedience we yield ourselves to Satan, so as to become the children of the father of lies. It is when we return to God by genuine repentance and faith in his word and Son, that he says, "I will be a Father unto you." As a Father,

I. *He is the Author of their spiritual Being.*

He by his Holy Spirit quickens those who were dead in trespasses and sins. He imparts the principle of spiritual existence, and raises from the death of sin, to newness of spiritual life. And as father, he not only gives life, but he imparts his *own nature.* His spiritual children are made to partake of the divine nature, 2 Pet. i. 4. Hence it is said they are "born again of the incorruptible seed of the word of God, which abideth forever," 1 Pet. i. 23. "Born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God," John i. 13. S- as God imparts his own nature to his spi ..ual children, so he also impresses his own image and likeness. Thus the new man is said to be "renewed in knowlege, after the image of him that created him," Col. iii. 10. See also Eph. iv. 23, 24. In connection with the divine nature and image, the children of God also possess his Spirit. Of such it is said, 'The Spirit of God dwelleth in you." Thus God said, "I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within you," &c., Ezek. xi. 19. As father,

II. *God supplies all the Need of his Children.*

In this respect, infants are not more helpless and dependent than the children of God. They are without strength and without resources. All their springs are in God. As an affectionate father, he does not allow them to lack any good thing. He supplies "all their need." He spreads before them a table in he wilderness. He gives them the bread and the water of life. His grace is freely bestowed to help them in every time of need. They have food to eat, of which the world knows nothing. His promises are like milk, and honey, and manna, as well as containing strong meat for the more mature and strong of his household. He also *clothes* them with the best robe, the garments of joy and salvation. He provides also for all their sicknesses, removes all their infirmities, and heals all their diseases. His supplies to his children are rich and abundant, varied and ever new, free and gratuitous, overflowing, satisfying, and everlasting. His mercies never fail, and his paternal care abideth forever and ever. As father,

III. *He provides them with a suitable Home and Habitation.*

In some respects God himself is the habitation or dwelling-place of his saints. But he has provided for his spiritual family, the tabernacle of his church on earth. Here they dwell in the bonds of fraternal love, united in the fellowship of the saints, having God their father with them, to do them good. The church is the dwelling-place, the home of God's children. Here they have the shelter, the repose, the solace of home. Here they have the interchange of thought, and feeling, and conversation, of kindred spirits. Here is the social board, the family table, &c. Then the Lord has prepared for their future residence and dwelling, the temple of his glory above. In the wilderness, the tabernacle, as a moveable tent, is most suited to them as sojourners, &c. The church beneath is their residence during their minority. But when of full age, they are received to their father's residence on high. That house, not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. This is the saints' everlasting home, where the united family of God shall be forever with the Lord. See Heb xi. 16. As father,

IV. *He secures the Instruction of his Children.*

For the soul to be without knowledge is not good. Knowledge is one of the distinguishing traits in the children of God. They are children of the light and of the day. They have the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus their Lord. The heaven to which they are destined and journeying, is the region of mind, the world of cloudless day. For the education of his children, he spreads before them *his marvellous works*. He has written for them the *volume* of life, the *scriptures* of eternal truth. He has appointed for them *teachers*,—pastors, to feed them with knowledge and understanding. In addition to these, he sends into their hearts his Holy Spirit, to lead them into all truth, to guide them by his counsel, that afterwards they may be received to glory. As father,

V. *He guards and protects his Children.*

As spiritual, they are exposed to innumerable perils and enemies. The world hateth them. Satan seeks to destroy them. They are encompassed with adversaries. Without God's gracious help and protection, they would necessarily perish. God however is their shield and defence. He is their fortress and high tower. He is round them as the walls were round about Jerusalem. He secures them from all evil, and keeps them night and day. Holding them in his hand, "they shall never perish," &c. "Kept by the power of God," &c. As father,

VI. *He gives them a Glorious and everlasting Portion.*

None can tell the reward and the riches of the inheritance which God has laid up for them that love him. Now, they have the unsearchable riches of grace; and hereafter, the unfading glories and riches of eternity. He gives each of his children a kingdom, a throne, a crown, and bliss, and joy for evermore.

APPLICATION.

1. Learn the happiness and blessedness of those who are the children of God. What honor, what joy, what security, they possess! Consider,

2. The high claims which God has upon his children. How they should reverence and fear him. Love and delight in him. Follow and obey him.

3. The misery of the children of the wicked one. Dark, wretched, enslaved miserable and perishing.

4. Urge upon such to turn unto God and to seek his pardoning mercy, that they may live.

XXX.—THE ROYAL CHARACTER OF GOD.

"A great King above all gods."—*Ps.* xcv. 3

THE greatness of God is unsearchable. None can fully find him out, or know him to perfection. He is the one infinite, self-existent, and ever-blessed potentate, who hath immortality in himself, the same yesterday, to-day, and forever. Among the various representations of the divine being, is that wherein he is exhibited as the great ruler of the universe, as the supreme monarch of heaven and earth. Often is he spoken of as king—"King over all the earth." As "clothed with majesty." As "an everlasting King," whose throne is "in the heavens," and whose "kingdom ruleth over all." As king, the blessed God,

I. *Has his Dominions.*

These embrace the whole universe. He ruleth over all. He reigns over heaven and earth, and in hell he sways the sceptre of his righteous judgments and holy displeasure Within his dominions, we must include all the material parts of the universe. All existence, whether merely animal, or rational, or angelic. All worlds, and all things, are within the range of his rule and dominion. Or we may view the kingdom of God as comprising, (1) The kingdom of nature, wherein he ruleth over the whole material universe. (2) The kingdom of providence, wherein he superintends and directs all events to the effectual accomplishment of all his holy, wise, and benevolent purposes. (3) The kingdom of his grace, or the administration of his love and mercy to a sinful race, through the mediation of his Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ. (4) The kingdom of his glory, where he more fully and immediately diffuses abroad the rays of his divine splendor, and where, among angels and happy spirits, he especially dwells, and where there is "fulness of joy and pleasures for evermore." As king,

II. *He has his Throne and Sceptre*

The throne of God is in the highest heaven, and Job describes it as being so elevated that its splendor is beyond created vision. "He holdeth back the face of his throne, and spreadeth his cloud upon it" Job xxvi. 9. It is described as the 'throne of his holiness," Ps. xlvii. 8. Daniel beheld Jehovah's throne in a vision, and likens it to "the fiery flame," and says, "A fiery stream issued and came forth from before him," &c., Dan. vii. 9. See also Ezekiel's vision, i. 26, 27, &c. Now the sceptre of God is a sceptre of righteousness. He reigneth and ruleth in righteousness. In all his administrations "just and right is he." As a king,

III. *He has Laws and Statutes.*

Now these laws are the established principles for the regulation of all things pertaining to his wide and glorious dominions. He has physical laws for the material works of his hands. And moral laws for the direction of intelligent and responsible beings. These laws are the reflection of his own wise, and righteous, and benevolent mind. They are just and good. Those laws which relate to mankind, are revealed and published in the holy scriptures. Here we have the will of God written under the infallible direction of the Holy Spirit. These laws are clear, impartial, full, and are sanctioned by the most awful penalties and glorious rewards. As a king,

IV. *He has his royal Guards and Army.*

In Daniel it is written, "He doeth according to his will in the army of heaven." Elisha's servant, after his eyes were opened, beheld the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about, 2 Kings vi. 17. The psalmist says, "The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels," Ps. lxviii. 17. Myriads of exalted creatures vested with power, and swifter than the winds, are ever ready to do his will and execute his pleasure. As king,

V. *He has magnificent Palaces and Dwellings.*

His presence fills all space. He is everywhere, beholding all things, and upholding all things by the word of his power. But he has his especial dwelling-places. He dwells, (1) In the hearts of his humble saints. He says, I dwell with "him that is of a contrite and humble spirit," &c., Isaiah lvii. 15. "I will dwell in them," &c., 2 Cor. vi. 16. (2) He dwells in the midst of his church. As he dwelt in ancient times in Zion, and displayed his presence from between the cherubim, so he is in the midst of his spiritual sanctuary, and in the plenitude of his Spirit, he makes the church his holy and delightful habitation. The apostle says, "In whom ye also are builded together, for an habitation of God through the Spirit," Eph. ii. 22. (3) He has his august and most glorious dwelling on high. He says, "I dwell in the high and holy place." The poet had this passage in view when he sang:—

> "Eternal power whose high abode,
> Becomes the grandeur of a God,
> Infinite lengths, beyond the bounds,
> Where stars revolve their little rounds"

APPLICATION.

If Jehovah be invested with supreme and universal dominion and majesty, then learn,

1. The reverence and humility which we should exhibit before him.

How we should hallow his name, and fear, when we contemplate his holiness and glory.

2. As king he demands our loyal homage and constant obedience.

His claims are founded on his right to have dominion, and on our duty to yield him our willing and cheerful service.

3. As a king his wrath will be fearful and overwhelming.

His holiness and truth will not allow him to connive at iniquity. All sin is treason against his majesty, rebellion against his government. Let disobedient sinners forsake their evil ways and live. He will freely exercise mercy towards those who repent, and come to him through the mediation of his beloved Son.

4. How happy are his loyal subjects.

He enriches, dignifies, and makes supremely happy those who trust in him and love him. "Happy art thou, O Israel," &c. "Let the children of Zion be joyful," &c.

5. His incorrigible foes he will cast down into the abodes of darkness and misery forever and ever.

XXXI.—GOD THE REFUGE OF HIS PEOPLE.

"God is a refuge for us."—*Psalm* lxii. 8

The life of the godly man is one of ex

posedness to sorrow and peril. He participates in that trouble which is the common portion of all men. He with all others is liable to sickness, adversity, bereavements, and death. Born to trouble, as the sparks fly upward. But in addition to these, he is in an enemy's country. He is passing through a dreary wilderness, a wilderness of storms and dangers, where hostile hosts are leagued against him. Strengthless and insufficient of himself, this is his comfort and safety,—God is his refuge, a present help in every time of trouble. We ask,

I. *When is God a Refuge to his People?*

He is so,

1. In the period of temptation

When Satan comes in like a flood, &c. When he would sift as wheat. When his fiery darts are directed in fearful volleys against the people of God. These seasons are perilous, and would be fearfully fatal, were not God a refuge for us.

2. In the day of adversity.

When earthly good seems to forsake us. When our enjoyments fail. When providence seems adverse to us. When all appears to be against us. When created resources are dried up. To Jacob, to Job, to David, and to thousands, he has been their help and refuge.

3. In the night of affliction.

When health has been exchanged for sickness, strength for weakness, ease for pain, joy and gladness for weariness and decay,—when wearisome days, &c., are appointed, when heart and flesh fail. None but his arm can then sustain, his presence cheer, his love console. He is the sick man's refuge, when compelled to retire to his solitary chamber, and lie upon the couch of pain.

4. In the solemnities of death.

Whence shall the spirit fly when chased out of her old habitation and abode? when she is no longer surrounded by the tabernacle of the body? Then the bosom of God is the refuge. The house not made with hands is the abode; the heavenly mansion, the dwelling, forever and ever. We inquire,

II. *What sort of a Refuge God is to his People?*

1. He is invulnerable.

In God is absolute security. A far more secure defence than the munition of rocks. "If God be for us," &c. "Who is he that shall harm us," &c. "In the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength."

2. He is a refuge ever near.

His omnipresence ever surrounds us. Wherever we are, God is near at hand, and not afar off. No difficulty in coming to the refuge. Indeed, we cannot flee from him. We cannot go from the presence of his Spirit. See Ps. cxxxix. 7, 12.

3. Always accessible.

Not only near to us, but open to receive. Ready to shelter and to screen us. His eyes are ever upon the righteous, and his ears always open to their cry. In the day of trouble, he hears the prayer of the distressed, and sends deliverance, and enables them to glorify him.

4. Unchanging and eternal.

A refuge to his people in all countries, and ages, and generations. A refuge now, and always, and evermore. A refuge that never fails. A refuge in time and through all eternity. If God be such a refuge, then we infer, (1) The absolute security of his people. Amidst all the changes and revolutions around them, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea, &c., "God is their refuge, a very present help in trouble." (2) The confidence they should feel towards God. Trust in him at all times and forever. Commit all to his care and keeping. (3) The course they should pursue in all their troubles. Flee to God. Seek his almighty help and succor. Fervently call upon his holy and gracious name. (4) Let the sinner flee by faith in Christ to this refuge, that he may escape the storms of unending wrath in the world to come.

XXXII.—GOD THE GUIDE OF HIS PEOPLE.

"He will be our guide even unto death."—*Ps.* xlviii. 14.

THE people of God are pilgrims and strangers on the earth; they seek a better country, that is to say, a heavenly one. A life of piety supposes the affections and desires of the heart to be in heaven. This is not the good man's rest, for it is polluted. Like the children of Israel, he is journeying to the place which the Lord said he would give unto him, and, as the tribes who went up to Jerusalem, he goes forth

from strength to strength, until he appears before God in Zion. But he is a creature of wants in all his pilgrimage. He wants necessary food, and raiment, and rest. But he also requires constant direction,—he needs a constant guide. His path is one he has never before traversed. He is ignorant of the way, and without a guide, his course would be uncertain, and very probably his end unattained. God graciously engages to conduct him. To be to him as the pillar of cloud and fire was to Israel. So that with joyous rapture he exclaims, This God shall be my God forever and ever. He will be my "guide even unto death." Observe,

I. *The good Man's Need of a Guide.*

And this necessarily arises,

1. From his ignorance.

He is not in darkness, but he is at present the child of the dawn. His knowledge is so limited, that he cannot trust to it. He only knows the first elements of truth. He has entered on the path of life, but he feels it needful to seek direction and guidance every step. He prays, "Lead me into a plain path," &c. "Lead me in the way everlasting," &c.

2. From the diversified paths which surround him.

Now there are many paths which seem right to men, and which are called good and excellent by men of the world, and which notwithstanding lead from the right way. Sin has a thousand treacherous paths, many of them apparently good, and most of them fascinating, &c. There are paths of mere morality, of self-righteousness, of spiritual apathy, of carnal security, &c. How necessary then to have a guide.

3. From the temptations to which he is subject.

It is the work of Satan to allure and deceive, that he may ruin and destroy. He lays snares for the travellers' feet. He tries to turn them aside, from the way of duty and safety. Or to suggest that the way is tedious, embarrassing, and uncomfortable. Then,

4. There is the tendency of their own hearts to evil.

The heart within them is only partially sanctified. Liable to err. Often willing to be deceived. Apt to turn aside. Hence the caution of the apostle, "Take heed lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelieving, in departing from the living God," Heb. iii 12. The child of God often prays,

> "Let thy grace, Lord, like a fetter,
> Bind my wandering heart to thee."

Let us inquire,

II. *How God guides his People.*

1. By the counsels of his truth.

"Thou shalt guide me by thy counsel." God has given his holy word to be the guide of our steps. Here is plainly and distinctively marked out the way we should go. How often the psalmist refers to it. "O that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes," Ps. cxix. 5. "Wherewithal shall a young man," &c., ver. 9. "I will run in the way of thy commandments," &c., ver. 32. See also verses 35, 59, 104

2. By the ministry of his servants.

Of old he raised up Moses, and Joshua, and Caleb. Afterwards Samuel and the prophets. He also came to minister and to teach mankind in the person of his Son, Heb. i. 2, &c. He has established the ministry of the word with the Christian dispensation. "He gave some apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists," &c., Eph. iv. 11. See also 1 Cor. xii. 28

3. By the teaching of his Spirit.

"And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another comforter," &c. "He shall teach you all things." "He will guide you into all truth," John xiv. 16–26, xvi. 13. Let us ascertain,

III. *What kind of a Guide God is to his People.*

1. He is an infallible guide.

He is incapable of error He knows every thing connected both with the travellers, the way, and the perils to which they are exposed. He knows all things even from the beginning.

2. He is patient and forbearing.

He remembers that his people are but dust. His long suffering is greatly displayed in enduring their provocations, in not wearying with their slow advances and patiently sustaining them amidst all their unworthiness.

3. He is affectionate and tender.

As the shepherd kindly leads his flock. As the mother aids her infant child to walk. His loving-kindness is perpetually displayed. He breaks not the bruised reed, &c. He carries in his arms, shelters beneath his wings, guides with his eye, and preserves in the hollow of his hand.

4. He is constant and unfailing.

He never leaves, nor ever forsakes. He guides their youth to mature years, and, casts not off in the time of old age, nor forsakes when their strength faileth. He guides even to death. He conducts his people to glory

APPLICATION.

1. Are we under the guidance of God? Have we yielded ourselves to him? Do we hear his voice and obey it? Read his word and follow it? Meditate on his example and imitate it? Pray for his Spirit, and attend to the holy suggestions which he imparts?

2. Let such cherish a spirit suited to their character and condition.

Reverence and holy fear. Confidence in God. Adherence to the truth. Fervent prayer and earnest activity of mind. Self-denial and glowing ardor after the heavenly state.

3. Urge sinners to turn from the way of death, and live.

In the way of darkness, under the guidance of the prince of darkness, you must inevitably sink into the abyss of darkness forever. "Thus saith the Lord Ask for the old paths," &c.

XXXIII.—GOD THE SHIELD OF THE RIGHTEOUS.

"I am thy shield."—*Gen.* xv. 1.

To Abraham these gracious words were spoken. Spoken unto him in a vision, spoken by the Lord of hosts. Spoken by him who is faithful and true, and who never failed in aught that he promised to his people. Abraham's history verified the promise. God was indeed his shield; no evil came near him; and after having enjoyed the protection of the divine presence, and the favor of the divine friendship, doubtless God became his heavenly and exceeding great reward. But the text need not be limited to Abraham. The promise is equally the property of all his spiritual seed. God is the seed of all the righteous, Observe,

I. *The Righteous require a Shield.*

They have enemies. Wicked men are such. Evil spirits are such. Against the righteous these are combined under one mighty, malevolent, persevering, and potent adversary, the devil. He is represented as a roaring lion As a powerful prince. As an enemy who throws his fiery darts to destroy them. Of themselves they are not sufficient to oppose his diabolical power, consequently they are in a position of imminent peril. Under these circumstances they would necessarily perish, if God did not graciously interpose and engage to be their shield. Consider,

II. *In what respects God is their shield.*

A shield is that piece of defensive armor by which the arrows or strokes of the adversary are warded off. Now God is the shield of his people in a variety of respects.

1. He is the shield of their substance.

He puts a hedge around all that they have. Satan could not injure the property of Job until God said, "Behold, all that he hath is in thy power," Job i. 12. God says that no plague shall come nigh their dwelling, Ps. xci. 10.

2. He is the shield of their bodies.

He holds the lives and breath of his saints in his hand. He gives his angels charge concerning them, &c., Ps. xci. 11. See also Isaiah xxxiii. 16. The Lord will preserve and keep them alive, &c., Ps xxxiii. 16, 19.

3. He is the shield of their souls.

He guides, he keeps, and upholds the souls of his people. He watches for their safety. He preserves from Satan's attacks, from the world's snares, and from the frailties arising from the infirmities of the flesh. Thus God is the shield of the righteous, in all they are, and have. Notice,

III. *The peculiar Excellencies of this Shield.*

1. It is omnipotent

The mighty power of God is the shield and defence of the righteous. "Kept by the power of God." A shield all-sufficient. Never failed.

2. It is a perpetual shield.

At all times and in all places. In every age and season. Throughout life, and in the valley and shadow of death.

3. A universal shield.

Of the whole collective church, and of each member in particular. Not one of God's spiritual family is overlooked or left exposed to peril. He is the shield of each one, and of all who trust in him.

4. The only shield.

Nothing would avail. Human policy, wisdom power, combination, all unavailing without God. He only is the sure invin

sible, and everlasting defence and shield of the righteous.

APPLICATION.

1. Let saints cleave to the Lord, and thus avail themselves of this invaluable shield. Faith and prayer encircle us with God's protecting and preserving power.

2. Be grateful for it. How we ought to exult in it, and give God constant and hearty thanks for it.

3. How awful is the condition of the sinner. Not only without this shield, but in opposition to God, and exposed to his divine power and wrath. O let such flee to the Mediator, and lay hold of God's strength and be at peace.

XXXIV.—JEHOVAH LIKENED TO A HUSBANDMAN.

"My Father is the husbandman."—*John* xv. 1.

RURAL and agricultural figures are often made use of to express the relationship between God and his people. The church is sometimes represented as the garden of the Lord, the Lord's plantation, or the field of grain, ripening for a joyous and an abundant harvest. The figure of a vineyard is very often employed by the ancient prophets. Isaiah says, "My well-beloved hath a vineyard in a very fruitful hill," &c., Isaiah v. 1; and see also, Jer. ii. 21, &c.; Ezek. xix. 10; and Joel i. 7. The Saviour adopts the same emblem, and says, I am the true vine and "my Father is the husbandman," or the proprietor and dresser of the vine. As a husbandman let us consider,

I. *Jehovah's Vineyard.*

This is his church. And this vineyard of the Lord,

1. Was originally a waste.

Sin blighted both the powers and condition of man. Robbed him of his righteousness and bliss, and also his dominion and estate. Left him barren of true good. Now God by his providence and grace, transforms this sterile waste and makes it a delightful vineyard to himself. Thus the prophet speaks of him, "gathering out the stones," &c., Isaiah v. 2. He makes all things new. This vineyard,

2. Became the object of his choice and care.

He fixed his gracious regards upon it. He resolved to form a people for himself To bring out of sterility a vineyard, to yield abundantly its cheering and refreshing fruit. To this end he planted it with plants of righteousness. He walls it round with the protecting fence of his presence and love. He raises up men to attend to its cultivation. He employs laborers to work in it.

3. On this vineyard he communicates the means of fruitfulness.

The vine-owner must depend upon the benign blessings of heaven. He must rest on his goodness who sends the fruitful shower, the genial beams of the sun, and favorable seasons of increase. Jehovah has all these resources within himself. He gives to his spiritual vineyard, the teeming rains, the enriching dews. The cheering rays of light and heat. He gives his word, his ordinances, his spiritual influences, and causeth his favors there to descend, even life for evermore.

4. From this vineyard he expects an adequate return of fruit.

The end of a vineyard is the obtaining of fruit. The husbandman expects this, reasonably looks for it; and looks for it in proportion to the means expended, and the favorable situation the vineyard occupies. Thus God expects a return of fruit from his church. He blesses them that they may be manifest blessings. He enlightens that they may shine, &c. He expects from them a return of *heart fruit*—holy dispositions, desires, tempers, thoughts, &c.; *lip fruit*—a wise and edifying conversation; *life fruit*—a constant regard to himself, by reverence, fear, grateful acknowledgments, supreme love, &c. And towards man, equity, truth, benevolence, and mercy. Over ourselves, vigilance, self-government, self-denial, &c. And God expects this fruit from all. But, from all, in proportion to their privileges and blessings. This fruit honors and pleases God; and is the best evidences that we can have, of our regeneration and acceptance with God. "He that is righteous doeth righteousness."

From the connective passage of our text, Jesus clearly teaches that union—vital union to him is essential to fruitfulness That all believers are branches of him, who is God's precious vine. And severed from him, we could yield no fruit. God has given him to be head over all things

o his church. He is the great and only mediu n of life and salvation, Let us consider,

II. *The Characteristics of Jehovah as the Husbandman of his Church.* Consider,

1. His infinite knowledge and wisdom.

All his plans and arrangements are grounded on wisdom that never errs. He adapts all means to their right and proper end. He knows all concerning his vineyard. What is best for it, &c.

2. His unbounded resources.

He has all things within the limit of his power. All events he can control. All kinds of seasons he can command. All evil he can avert. And all that is good and benign he can effect.

3. His unfailing fidelity.

He has made many gracious engagements with his people. Has given them many precious promises. But he never fails in executing his plans, and accomplishing his purposes. He forsaketh not the work of his hands. And he will finally make all things to redound to the eternal honor and glory of his name.

APPLICATION.

1. Learn the happiness and safety of God's people.

2. The righteous claims which God has upon them.

XXXV.—GOD THE PORTION OF HIS SAINTS.

"The Lord is the portion of mine inheritance."—*Psalm* xvi. 5.

THE wicked have their portion in this life. They seek after earthly good, on it they place their affections, and they are indifferent to the spiritual necessities of their undying souls. How insufficient, fleeting, and worthless is such a portion. Without satisfaction now, the mind in a state of restless anxiety, and as death approaches, nothing in prospect but a dark and dreadful eternity. Well might the preacher exclaim, "vanity of vanities." Well was the man, who made his barn and goods his portion, denominated "a fool." And wisely indeed does the psalmist pray, "Deliver my soul from the wicked, thy sword: from men which are thy hand, O Lord, from men of the world, which have their portion in this life," Psalm xvii. 13, 14. What a delightful contrast does the experience of the godly man present. He can rejoice, exclaiming in the language of the text, "The Lord is the portion of mine inheritance." Notice,

I. *How God becomes the Portion of his Saints.*

He does this by munificently, according to the riches of his grace, giving himself to his people. He says, "I will be your God" And this he does through the person and work of Jesus. He embodied the fulness of his love in Christ. And Christ came to reveal and to convey to every believer the favor and love of God. In Christ he exhibited his overflowing mercy, and made himself over as the portion and inheritance of all his saints. As God gives himself in Christ Jesus, so he is received and enjoyed as such, when faith is exercised in Christ. To as many as receive Christ, that is, believe on his name, he gives the privilege to become the sons of God, John i. 12. We become children and heirs of God by faith. In God, grace only is seen; and in man, faith only required for the possession of this divine portion, Eph. ii. 8; Gal. iv. 4–7. Consider,

II. *The Characteristics of this Portion.*

1. God is an infinite portion.

Every good is included in the enjoyment of God. Good equal to our need, and beyond all we can ask or conceive. Good beyond the need of all the intelligences he has created. Yea, infinitely beyond all this. All the attributes of God are infinite. Infinity is the region in which he dwells. And all that can be comprehended in the infinitude of God's riches and fulness, becomes the portion of the saint, Eph. iii. 20

2. God is a satisfying portion.

He who made the soul can fill it, and with such blessings and enjoyments which are suited to its capacities and desires. Now this is what the whole world could not do. The spirit of man must have spiritual good, and this is found in God alone. O yes, God can fill, and overflow the heart with ineffable joy and delight, 1 Peter i. 8.

3. God is a present portion

He is not a good in prospect merely, but in possession. He dwells in the soul, and is a present bliss and consolation. "O God, thou art my God," &c., Psalm lxiii. 1.

4. God is a sure portion

Other portions may be exhausted, God cannot fail. Other portions may be lost or transferred, but God is the abiding, unchanging treasure of his saints. Sure to them in all countries, at all times, and under all circumstances. Sure in youth and old age. In prosperity and adversity. In health and sickness. In life and death. In time and eternity.

5. God is an eternal portion.

A portion for the world to come. A portion of "life everlasting," infinitude of joy, and "pleasures for evermore." And it is not too much to hope, a portion which will be increasingly blissful and precious forever and ever. "An eternal weight of glory." "A crown that fadeth not away."

III. *What is the right Application of this Portion.*

1. We should enjoy it.

God desires that we should enjoy his light, his love, his peace; in one word, his divine nature.

2. That we should be grateful for it.

So we ought for every blessing. For existence, health, food, &c. Much more, for God as our portion. Our thanks should be sincere, fervent, constant as they will finally be everlasting.

"Eternity will be too short,
To utter all his praise."

3. We should be improved by it.

In purity of nature, in dignity of character, in expansion of soul, in usefulness of life, and in fitness for heaven.

4. We should recommend it.

How many are poor, and wretched, and dying. Far from God. Without God, and without hope in the world. O tell them of God's love. Of his mercy. Of the way to his favor. Of his readiness to bless and save

APPLICATION

1. Consider the present and eternal advantages of piety.

2. The misery of men who know not the love of God. However learned, or dignified, or rich.

3. Advise every sinner to seek the Lord, and live.

XXXVI.—GOD COMPARED TO A FOUNTAIN.

"The fountain of living waters."—*Jer* ii. 13.

WATER is one of the essential things of life. As such it is often made the emblem of spiritual blessings. Jehovah is appealing in the text to the Jews who had given themselves up to idolatry, and he calls upon the heavens to be astonished at the twofold evil of which they were guilty. They had forsaken him, "the fountain of living waters;" and they had hewn out "cisterns, broken cisterns that could hold no water.' A fountain is that which has a spring within itself, and thus supplies from its own source what may be taken from it. A cistern only holds that conveyed into it, may be drained, and has no source of supply in itself. A cistern broken is still more useless, and only tantalizes those who may approach it to obtain water. God is the great source of all the good man needs, or can possibly enjoy, in the present life, or in that which is to come.

I. *God is the Fountain of all Existence.*

All creatures have their being in him. He is the God of life. He gives life. Sustains and preserves life. In him, angels and men, with every animated creature, live, and move, and have their being. All the gods of the heathen never gave existence to one creature. All the idols of the world never perpetuated for a moment the life of one devotee. God is the fountain of universal existence and being.

II. *God is the Fountain of all Enjoyment.*

All creatures are happy as they answer the end of their being. God designed that every order should have enjoyment in proportion to their instincts, capacities, and powers.

Thus the mere animal creatures enjoy life and the provision needful for their wants. Thus rational beings and celestial spirits enjoy existence, and are happy as they move in the spheres appointed them, and exercise to the glory of the Creator the powers they possess. But this enjoyment is from God. It proceeds from his goodness and benignity, and his wisdom is manifested in the medium of imparting it unto them which he has devised and appointed. But all enjoyment is from God. All that is real, and solid, and valuable All that is suitable and abiding.

III. *God is the Fountain of Salvation.*

1. The author of salvation came forth from him.

He gave his Son, sent him forth, anointed him, delivered him up, accepted his sac

rifice. Attested to his divinity and glory. "God so loved," &c. "Herein is love, not that we loved God," &c.

2. The gospel of salvation emanates from him.

It is the "glorious gospel of the blessed God." It publishes God's love, and mercy, and grace, to a lost world. Message of God to man. The stream of gospel invitation takes its rise in the fountain of Jehovah's compassion.

3. The spirit of salvation flows from him.

"If any man thirst," &c. This Jesus spake of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit proceedeth from the Father. He pours it out from on high. He gives his Holy Spirit to them who ask it.

4. The blessings of salvation are the streams issuing from the fountain.

Of these there are several, all precious, sweet, and essential to the well-being of man.

(1) There is the stream of remission of ins and justifying grace.

(2) There is the stream of adopting love.

(3) The stream of sanctifying influence.

(4) The stream of holy peace.

(5) The stream of heavenly joy.

(6) The stream of communion with God.

And all these streams flow to us in one great channel, "the unsearchable riches of his grace."

IV. *God is the Fountain of Glory.*

All the dignity and bliss of heaven flows from him. He is the sun of heaven. His throne is surrounded by "a pure river of life, clear as crystal," &c., Rev. xxii. 1, &c.

In his presence is "fulness of joy," and at his right hand "pleasures for evermore." He gives immortality and eternal life to all he saved in glory.

APPLICATION.

Learn,

1. How vain to seek bliss except in God. It cannot be,—myriads have tried to obtain it, irrespective of God, but all of them have failed.

2. How sufficient God is for the perfect happiness of all his creatures.

In him is infinite good. Fulness of all benignity and love. Fulness which cannot be diminished.

3. How accessible is this fountain through Jesus Christ.

A way opened to it. All invited. All made welcome. And faith in Christ the only prerequisite. O come and drink of these living waters. Abide by this fountain, forsake it not, and live forever

XXXVII.—GOD THE HUSBAND OF THE CHURCH.

"Thy Maker is thy husband."—*Isa.* liv 5.

How unsearchable is the greatness and glory of God. He is the high and lofty one, who inhabiteth eternity, who filleth heaven and earth with his presence, and before whom unnumbered myriads of bright intelligences worship and adore. Yet notwithstanding his supreme majesty and glory, he condescends not only to behold the things done upon the earth, but to visit sinful man with his favor, and to exalt him to dignity, happiness, and heaven. In exhibiting his wonderful grace to man, he stoops and assumes the most close and endearing relationship to him. How surprising that the monarch of the skies should condescend to represent himself as the "husband" of his people. Yet he did so to wayward rebellious Israel, and he does so to all who constitute his church or people now. Each believer may consider the text as addressed to him, "Thy Maker is thy husband." Observe,

I. *The Union specified.*

"Thy husband." The union when rightly formed is,

1. Grounded in love.

God loved the church, and fixed his gracious affections upon it. The height, and depth, and length, and breadth, of this love, are immeasurable; they surpass all created understanding. It is a union,

2. Most intimate and endearing.

In this union there is a community of interests, and the connection is one of the most close that can be formed. The apostle refers to this in several passages. Such, (and in some respects still more intimate,) is the union between God and his church. By faith we are made recipients of the divine promises, and through them of the divine nature. Believers are said to dwell in God, and God dwells in them

3. It is a union most abiding.

It endures until the death of one of the parties. It is very different to a mere friendly compact, or commercial treaty. Such also is the union between God and his people. Believers yield themselves to be his for

over in a perpetual covenant never to be broken off again. God engages to be their present salvation, and everlasting portion and reward.

4. It is a union entirely mutual.

Personal interest is lost, and the mutual interests of both is the professed end of this union. The husband careth for the things of his wife, and the wife for the things of her husband. Thus God manifests his sympathy, love, and care, for his church. And the church professes in all things to show forth the glory of God. She engages to hallow his name, to revere his laws, to maintain his ordinances, and to show forth everywhere his praises, by devout and fervent thanksgiving to his name. Consider,

II. *The Formation of this Union.*

1. It originated in God's amazing love.

God fixed his compassionate regards on fallen, sinful man. He purposed his restoration to himself. He determined to raise him to dignity and bliss, and this through the conjugal union with himself.

2. It was rendered possible by the work of Jesus Christ.

God as the fountain of light, and purity, and love, could not be closely and complacently united to ignorance, impiety, and sin. He therefore sent forth his Son in our nature, to magnify his law, to atone for sin by his death, and as mediator, to be the reconciler and the medium of union between God and man. "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself," &c., 2 Cor. v. 19.

3. To this union God invites sinners in his blessed gospel.

He compares the provision of the gospel to a nuptial feast. He represents his spiritual kingdom as being like unto "A certain king who made a marriage for his son," &c., Matt. xxii 1–13. The great end of the gospel is to bring men to a state of gracious and saving union with God.

4. This union is consummated on the *day* when the believer yields himself to God.

Faith in God's word brings our souls into gracious and acceptable contact with Deity. To those who receive his gracious overtures of mercy, he gives the privilege of adoption, of union to himself, and of hope as to the bestowment of eternal life.

III. *The Advantages of this Union to Believers.*

1. It is their exaltation

How mean and low and wretched in their natural state. How dignified and exalted when the bride of Jehovah. This is rank and elevation above that of angels. Dignity which human language cannot express.

2. It is their unspeakable riches.

Poor and insolvent, by this union they become enriched with the unsearchable riches of his grace. The blessed God, in all his attributes and glories, is their portion, and present and eternal reward. "All are yours," &c. "Heirs of God."

3. It is their present blessedness.

Union with God is associated with comfort, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. The love of God is shed abroad in their hearts. They rejoice too with joy unspeakable and full of glory. God's favor is their constant enjoyment, and in the radiant beams of his smiling countenance, they have overflowing bliss.

4. It will be their everlasting salvation.

Salvation intrinsically consists in the soul's union with God. And this union, which in heaven will be immediate, full, and unceasing, will be the very essence of that glory and happiness which the redeemed will enjoy forever and ever. This will annihilate all sources of evil, and be the blissful river of endless life.

APPLICATION.

1. From this union diversified duties and obligations arise. From this union God claims supreme love, reverence, subjection, and obedience. He requires unfailing fidelity, confidence, and dependence. He requires zeal for his glory. Jealousy of his honor. Activity in his service, and entire devotedness to his cause.

2. Urge upon sinners immediate self dedication to God. Every possible reason and motive should induce them so to do. "Seek first the kingdom of God," &c This is the basis of all good, both for body and soul, earth and heaven, time and eternity.

XXXVIII.—NO ROCK LIKE THE GOD OF ISRAEL.

"For their rock is not as our rock; even our enemies themselves being judges."—*Deut.* xxxii 31

God is a spirit, and therefore he cannot

possibly come under the observation of our senses. We cannot see him. There is considerable difficulty too in enabling us to understand rightly a spiritual being. To effect this the sacred writers have generally presented him to our view in the language of figure. Thus we often read of him as though he possessed bodily senses and parts, as eyes and mouth, and feet and hands. Sometimes too the inanimate creation is made use of to give us clear and striking views of his character and perfections. He is the sun of the universe. He is the breath or wind of the world He is the fountain of living waters He is the rock or foundation of all things. Now this last was a very favorite metaphor with the sacred writers. Hence we read of the rock of Israel. The rock of our refuge. The rock of salvation. Now in considering the blessed Jehovah under this figurative distinction, we will endeavor,

I. *To illustrate the Metaphor.*

In this text the metaphor refers to what God is in himself and what he is to his people.

1. When we speak of God as a rock in reference to himself, the ideas are such as these.

(1) Strength. The rock is the emblem of strength. The mighty tree appears strong, but the wind roots it up,—the storm levels it in its fury. Not so the rock, the tempest passes over it in vain. The foaming waters of the ocean dash upon it in vain. God is the perfection of strength. All power belongs unto God. His word is omnific. He speaks and it is done: he wills and it stands fast.

(2) The rock is the emblem of stability. The travelle in visiting ancient cities, is directed to the relics of former grandeur. The work of science and art cannot stand against the effacing influence of age. The ancient cities, and temples, and palaces, and monuments, have in many cases passed away. Not so the rock,—the rock of Horeb, the scene of such ancient miracles and grandeur, remains unto this day. Now God is distinguished for his stability. He is of one mind. He changes not. He is the same yesterday, to-day, and forever.

(3) The rock is a striking emblem of perpetuity, a faint representation of eternity. Other things move and change. The heavenly bodies, the waters of the sea, &c. But the rock reminds us of that great being who is from everlasting to everlasting —God. Now these ideas serve to show us the propriety of the metaphor as it respects what God is in himself. Let us consider the metaphor in reference,

2. To what God is to his believing children.

(1) As such he is the rock of their defence. Jerusalem was thus considered impregnable. Of all sources of security the rock seems to yield the surest. Now the Lord is the sure defence of them that trust in him. "Trust in the Lord Jehovah," &c. He is the munition of rocks to all his saints. "If God be for us," &c. Who can curse if God blesseth?

(2) He is the rock of their foundation. Every man is building a structure for the future Christ beautifully illustrated this in the two builders, &c. Now God is the basis of all the hopes, &c., of the Christian. They rely on him. Trust in him He is their sure foundation, elect, precious, and eternal.

(3) He is their rock of shelter and shade. When storms arise, they flee unto him. He is their immutable security. Hiding-place from the storm. He is the cooling, refreshing shade of his people, from the scorching heat, &c. The Christian is a pilgrim, and in going through the desert, he meets with terrible storms and sultry heat. God is both his shelter and his shade, Isa. xxv. 4, xxxii. 2.

(4) He is the rock of their supplies. You remember that the people of Israel were ready to perish. See Numb. xxii. 11; Deut. xxxii. 13. Now the writers here refer to the wild honey which was collected from the fissures of the rocks, the oil of olives too which was collected from the same place. Now God is the fountain of all our supplies. He yields all we need for body, soul, time, and eternity. All our springs are in him. "Every good gift and perfect," &c. Such then is the character of our rock. Observe,

II. *The triumphant Comparison which is instituted.*

'Their rock," &c. Now whatever we depend upon and trust in is our rock. The pagan trusts in his idols. The infidel in his skepticism. The miser in his riches. The sensualist in his pleasures. The Pharisee in his works. Now to all of these we say, your rock is not as our rock. You have not the security, the sensible enjoy

ments, the supplies,—in one word, the happiness which the people of God possess. Now we will not allow our opinions to decide, but, even ye yourselves being judges,

1. We appeal to your experience.

This testifies that your rock, &c. What changes do you profess to have experienced? What evils removed? What principles implanted?

2. We appeal to your enjoyments.

What peace,—what comfort,—what hope,—what real bliss!

3. We appeal to your practice.

From what follies and sins have you been delivered. Are your principles more pure? Spirit, conversation, temper, &c.

4. We appeal to our advantages in sickness and death.

What security,—what ecstasies,—what clear enrapturing prospects! You know that your rock is not, &c.

APPLICATION

1. Invite the sinner to choose the Lord for the rock of his salvation. Flee to him by repentance. Build on him by faith in Christ Jesus.

2. Let the Christian be *satisfied* with his choice. The everlasting God is his refuge.

XXXIX.—GOD THE FATHER OF LIGHTS.

"Do not err, my beloved brethren. Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning."—*James* i. 16, 17.

The text was evidently designed to counteract and overthrow a very dangerous sentiment which has prevailed in every age of the world. The error was this,—that all good and evil emanated from God;—that God was the fountain of both good and evil. This seems to have entered into the spirit of Adam. The same evil seems to have prevailed in the days of the apostles. Doubtless this opinion was that which the apostle referred to in ver. 13,—"Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God, for God cannot be tempted of evil, neither can he tempt any man." Let us observe,

I. *Our Text presents a sublime Representation of Deity.*

II. *Exhibits him as the Source of all possible Good.*

III. *Cautions us against holding incorrect Views on this Subject.*

I. *Presents us with a sublime Representation of Deity.*

1. He is the father of lights.

By father is meant source, &c. In this sense he is the father of the universe—men, angels, &c. But the text refers to lights. Light is the emblem of goodness, and God is the father of all good

(1) *There is in nature the creature light.* That which shines and makes manifest, this was the direct offspring of Deity. There was a period when the eye of Deity rested on nothing but one chaotic mass. Then was the almighty pleased to say, "Let there be light: and there was light."

(2) *There are the orbs of light.* The sun moon, planets, and fixed stars God is said to have created all these. The psalmist hath said in the language of inspiration, "He made the sun to rule by day, the moon and stars to rule by night." Ps. cxxxvi. 8.

(3) *There are minds of light.* Mental light. God gave Adam an extensive capacity of knowledge, which he showed in giving proper names to all the beasts, birds, &c. When we look abroad on human nature, we see some minds of mighty intellect. A Newton, Locke, and Milton, &c., but there never was one ray of light, but what was derived from God. He is the father of lights.

(4) *There are angels of light.* And he is the father of these Angels are styled morning stars. The angel who rolled away the stone from the sepulchre is thus described: "His countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow. They dwell in the presence of God, &c. God is the father of lights.

(5) *There is the Saviour of light.*—And he is the father of him. In him dwells all the fulness of the Godhead. God filled him with his glory, so that he was the express image of the effulgence of the Deity. God is the father of the Messiah—he is the father of lights. But in the sublime representation of Deity in the text we are referred,

2. To the unchangeableness of his nature.

With whom is no variableness, &c. He does not—he cannot—alter or change. He is unchangeable. The heavenly bodies perform their revolutions Day is ex

changed for night, light for darkness, &c. But God alters not. God the fountain of all light and purity is ever the same. Even the angels fell from their first estate, and the sons of light became messengers of darkness,—but God, the great father of light, is without the shadow of turning. His nature is absolutely so. His perfections and attributes are so. His purposes and mind are so, &c. It is the prerogative of Deity to say, "I am the Lord, beside me there is none else." God is to his creatures the father of lights.

II. *God is exhibited as the Source of all possible Good.*

All that is really good proceeds from God. The text gives us a distinction. Every good and every perfect gift. Let us look at these two kinds of gifts.

1. Good gifts. Among the blessings to which we refer, are, existence, health, reason, all temporal blessings. Food, raiment, and all our providential mercies. God is the father of every good gift. This is a thing which we should never lose sight of. We have not a single good which is not the blessing of a good God.

2. Perfect gifts are those which emanate directly from Deity; they are sent to prepare us for eternity. The chief of these gifts are,

(1) The gift of the only-begotten Son of God. Jesus is the perfect Saviour. In him dwells all the fulness of the Father. God's great gift. God's holy, perfect Son, &c. His delight. This perfect gift proceeded from the father of lights.

(2) The gift of the Spirit. The comforter and sanctifier of the church of God. He came down from above, &c.

(3) Gift of the glorious gospel. God's news from heaven. The message of life, &c. Perfect good.

(4) The gift of a full pardon. Thy sins are forgiven. God gives remission of sin. He justifies, &c.

(5) Gift of a new nature. Renewed into the image of God. A new heart. Partakers of God's nature.

(6) The gift of sufficient grace. The enjoyment of God's constant favor. Perfect grace &c. Every good and perfect gift proceedeth from the father of lights. We have now noticed good and perfect gifts. Observe,

III *The Caution which the Text contains.* Do not err, &c.

1. Do not attribute any moral evil or darkness to God

It makes the Lord of glory worse than Beelzebub, &c. It attributes all wicked and impious thoughts to Deity. It makes the blessed Lord, who is the father of lights the fountain of darkness. No darkness or evil can proceed from him.

2. Do not attribute any good to any other being but Deity.

Whatever blessing you have received, it has all come from God, &c. All our influences proceed from God. This is an important truth. We never had one happy thought, but what proceeded from the father of lights—the Deity.

3. Do not err in restricting the benevolence of Deity.

It is a blessed truth that the bounties of nature are free to all. God is not partial, nor a respecter of persons. There is no man that cannot be perfectly happy if he choose God for his portion.

4. Do not err in respect to your own nature.

Every good and every perfect gift cometh from God, and not from yourselves Within much evil remains, and there are many things which you have not yet obtained: you are not to be satisfied with those blessings which you already possess, but strive to possess still more.

5. We ought to be thankful to God for the blessings we enjoy.

Our blessings are more numerous than the stars of the firmament, or the sand on the sea shore. We ought to know them. Be thankful for them. What are we to return to God? We are to return a grateful heart, &c. And even then, as the poet hath said,—

> "Eternity's too short,
> To utter all his praise."

To him be glory and honor forever and ever. Amen.

XL.—CHRIST AN ADVOCATE.

"An advocate with the Father."—1 *John* ii 1

The epistles of John are eminently of a practical and experimental character. They are designed to illustrate and enforce the true spirit and practice of godliness. Especially we have presented to us the supreme importance of love. Love to God, and love to the saints, and love to all men

He does not, however lose sight of the frailties of human nature, and the imperfections of the best of saints See ver. 8,

If we say," &c. And he directs how to obtain its pardon and removal from the soul. "If we confess," &c., ver. 9. He then enforces holy vigilance and avoidance of evil, ch. ii. 1,—"My little children." And then that the mind may not be involved in despair by contracted guilt, he presents the delightful truth of the text "And if any man sin," &c. Observe.

I. *The Case supposed.*

"If any man sin," &c. Sin is the transgression of the law. The law of God relates both to evils, which must be avoided, and to duties which must be performed. Now we may sin by omission of duty, or by violation of positive commands. The text, however, is addressed to the people of God, and it supposes that they may sin, yea, that if we say that we have no sin, he truth is not in us. Now this,

1. Is a universal fact.

"In many things we all offend." There is not a just man that sinneth not. We are taught continually to pray for mercy. And to go to the throne of grace for mercy, &c. There are sins of life, and how often we do what we ought not, &c. Sins of word, and how often the tongue offends. Sins of thought, secret sins of the heart, and how often these lead us from God, &c.

2. This is a most humbling fact.

We ought to repeat it with sorrow. With shame. With contrition. Our sins ought to abase and fill us with real sorrow. It is not a trifle to disobey God. To grieve our heavenly Father. To do despite to the Spirit of grace.

3. This is a fact which should not sink us in despair.

Our sins might justly bring down God's avenging wrath. "It is of the Lord's mercy," &c. Yet there is hope for the frail and erring followers of Jesus. There is a remedy for them. A door of hope. "A fountain opened for sin," &c. Then while they cannot be indifferent, and careless, and presumptuous, yet they need not despair. For observe,

II. *The Remedy provided.*

"We have an advocate," &c. An advocate is a patron or friend, who exerts his influence for another. In a court of justice, the advocate vindicates and pleads for his client. Now sin would expose the believer to eternal death. There is infinite evil in sin—in his sin. He has no liberty or charter to do evil. Therefore God's justice might righteously condemn him. But Christ is his advocate. He stands forth to avert the wrath he deserves, and, in doing this,

(1) He does not plead our innocency.

(2) He does not deny the charges brought forth.

(3) He does not vindicate our conduct. But he advocates the *bestowment of mercy*, and the communication of *renewing grace*. And he does this on the ground of our union to him. Faith unites the Christian to Jesus. He is in Christ. One with Christ. Christ pleads therefore his cause on the ground of his own perfect obedience to the law of God. And the sacrifice he has offered for sin. A sacrifice possessing infinite and eternal merit and efficacy. Observe then the qualifications which as our advocate Christ possesses.

1. He possesses the most exalted purity.

He stands before God, reflecting every ray of divine holiness. God beholds him with ineffable delight and approbation. This is expressed in the text, "The righteous." Not only so, but he exhibited his supreme love to his Father's honor in magnifying the law, &c. Finishing all the work the Father gave him to do.

2. He possesses infinite knowledge.

He knows all things, wherein the honor of his saints is concerned. He sees their circumstances, perils, and enemies. He knows what is best for them. We know not what to pray for, &c. Jesus cannot err, nor omit any thing through ignorance, which is for our welfare. He knows all the mind of God, and all the need of the Christian.

3. He possesses unbounded tenderness and love.

He loveth his people with inconceivable affection. He laid down his life for them. He is the gentle and good Shepherd, who carries his lambs, &c. He breaks not the bruised reed, &c. What compassion he displayed to the woman who was a sinner, to backsliding Peter, &c. How secure then our interests in his advocacy. He will not, he cannot forget, &c "Can a woman," &c.

4. His advocacy is most prevalent and effectual.

Him the Father ever heareth. He pro

sents that God more effectual than words. He appears as the lamb slain.

"Five bleeding wounds he bears,
Received on Calvary;
They pour effectual prayers,
They strongly plead for me.
Forgive, forgive, they ever cry,
Nor let that ransomed sinner die."

5. His advocacy is limited to believers.

For these only he intercedes: unbelief refuses Christ, and therefore necessarily excludes from his intercession. Faith puts the sinners' cause into his hands. And living by faith on him, and in him, it keeps it there.

APPLICATION.

1. Let the Christian rejoice and trust in the advocacy of Christ. Let him rejoice in its gratuitousness, freeness, &c.

2. We must constantly avail ourselves of it. Without it our best deeds will be rejected. And our sins separate us from God. In all things let Christ be our living advocate with the Father.

3. We invite the sinner to place his cause in Christ's hands. Such as come unto him by faith he will in no wise cast out.

XLI.—CHRIST THE REFINER.

"And he shall sit as a refiner."—*Mal.* iii. 3.

CHRIST is obviously intended in this prophecy, and it quite accords with the apostle's description of the end of Christ's coming: "Who gave himself that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works," Tit. ii. 14. Christ's refining is the purifying of his people, the removal of all dross and alloy, and imparting unto hem those holy qualities which will render them fit for the most honorable purposes on earth, and finally meet for the inheritance of the saints in light. The gold of Christ's church is not pure, until he hath sat, and brought it through the refining process.

I. *How then does he do this, in what Way does he act as the Refiner of his People?*

1. His truth is refining.

The words of his mouth are pure words, and they enlighten the eyes, and exert a cleansing power over the heart and life. Hence he prayed to his Father, and said, "Sanctify them through thy truth, thy word is truth."

2. His Spirit is refining.

Hence that blessed agent is called the Holy Spirit, not only because he is essentially holy, but also because all holiness is the result of his influences. The Spirit refines by leading the mind into all truth, and by applying the blood of Jesus to the conscience, which cleanseth from all sin. Hence in reference both to the truth and the Spirit conjointly, the apostle says, "Ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit," 1 Pet. i. 22.

3. Christ refines by affliction.

He brings his people into the furnace, and by causing them to pass through the fires, he makes them to lose the dross and tin of sin. He himself is said to have been made perfect through sufferings, and though no chastening for the present is joyous, but grievous, yet afterwards it yieldeth the peaceable fruits of righteousness to them who are exercised thereby. It is by afflictions, that many of the graces are matured, and that the soul is conformed to the suffering Redeemer. Hence it is written, "Tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience, and experience hope; and hope maketh not ashamed." And again, "If children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together."

II. *The Qualifications of Christ as a Refiner.*

As the refiner, Christ possesses every qualification necessary for the work.

1. His skill is infinite.

He knows the nature of his materials. What they should lose, in what they are deficient, and what is requisite for their complete salvation.

2. Then his experience is extensive.

He has suffered, and knows the nature of every variety of affliction to which we are exposed. Poverty, reproach, tribulation, anguish, and death itself, were all endured by himself.

3. Then his tenderness is unbounded.

He not only knows the true nature of our sorrows, but he is "touched with the feeling of our infirmities." The attack of Saul upon the primitive Christians was felt by Jesus, when he said, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" His tenderness being such, he will not allow our sufferings

to be injurious, nor our temptations to be stronger than we are able to bear, nor will he ever leave us to the scorching influences of the fires, but when we are tried, bring us forth as gold. It is said, "he shall *sit* as a refiner;" that is, he shall watch the whole process; he shall heat or cool the furnace as circumstances require, and when he beholdeth the design accomplished, and his own image clearly reflected, he will then bestow the crown of glory that fadeth not away.

XLII.—CHRIST THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD.

"The light of men."—*John* i. 4.

One of the most wonderful and beautiful creatures in the world is light. It is one of the most striking emblems of the Deity. "God is light," &c. He is described as the father of lights. From him all light emanates. He is the light both of heaven and earth. The great moral sun of the universe, whose radiant beams fill heaven with glory, and earth with his benignity and love. Jesus, in whom dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead bodily, is represented in the text as "the light of men," and in another place, he spake of himself as "the light of the world." It is the province of light to illumine and thus make manifest, and it is doubtless in this sense that Jesus is spoken of as "the light of men." Consider,

I. *The Subjects which Jesus has made manifest.*

Some things were accessible to human investigation, irrespective of Christ's advent and mission. Such were the works of nature, the wonderful phenomena of the material world. These were studied by men who had no written revelation, and therefore were not directly enlightened by the Saviour. So it is still; many laborious and successful philosophers have been unfavorably disposed towards the Christian religion, and it is obvious that a man may be a student of the works of nature, and yet ignorant of the doctrines of the gospel. Neither did Jesus shed any light on literature, or the arts; on jurisprudence, or political economy. He pronounced no opinion as to forms of governments, but declared that his kingdom or administration was "not of this world."

1. Jesus made manifest the true character of God.

"No man hath seen God at any time the only-begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him," John i. 18. Moses and the prophets had given men revelations of the divine character. But theirs was exceedingly limited, only partial manifestation of God. Jesus shed his illustrious beams over all the perfections of the divine nature. He placed Deity before men in all his graciousness, and greatness, and glory. He placed the Father before men, in the boundlessness of his mercy, and in the unspeakable depths of his goodness and compassion. He also gave brighter views of his purity, justice, and truth, than had ever been revealed before. He made known his heavenly Father, as reconciled to the world, and as the friend of the guilty and perishing sinner. See John iii. 14–18.

2. Jesus made manifest the true condition of the sinner.

He shed light over the dreary valley of dry bones, and opened to observation the miserable state of a world without God. He revealed the depravity of human nature, the deceitfulness of the human heart. The extreme evil of sin. The helplessness of man. And the wrath to which his sins had justly exposed him. He gave a full and searching view of man's lost estate and miserable condition.

3. He made manifest the way of man's recovery and salvation.

He revealed himself as the way to heaven. He declared that he came expressly to seek and to save that which was lost. That he came to give his life for the world. That his sufferings, and death, and resurrection, were necessary to the remission of sins and acceptance with God. He repeatedly set himself forth as the one object of saving faith, and the only mediator or advocate with the Father.

4. He made manifest the nature and necessity of holiness.

He laid the basis of holiness in the regeneration of the soul. "Ye must be born again." "Except a man be born of water and the Spirit," &c. He demanded for God supreme love and obedience, and universal righteousness, goodness, and mercy, towards mankind. And he exhibited the gracious truths of his word, and the influences of the Spirit, as the divine means of

renewing, sanctifying, and keeping the heart. He insisted on holiness as essential to the enjoyment of the glory and face of God in heaven.

5. He made manifest the high calling and glorious privileges of his disciples.

He spoke of them as the sons of God. The objects of the Father's peculiar love. As his own friends. And as co-sharers in all the blessings and immunities of his kingdom. He made over to them the rich bequests of unspeakable peace. He gave them as their guide and comforter, the Holy Ghost. And he left all the promises of his love to be the solace of their souls, and the rejoicings of their hearts.

6. He made manifest their future blessedness and glory.

He brought life and immortality to light. He described heaven as his Father's house, and promised to receive them into those mansions of light and felicity, that they might be with him forever and ever. He engaged the bestowment to his disciples of a crown and kingdom that should never pass away. "Fear not, little flock," &c. Then shall the king say, "Come ye blessed," &c. Such are the subjects which Jesus made manifest as "the light of men." Observe,

II. *How he communicates himself as the Light of Men.*

He does so,

1. By the radiant beams of his word.

His glory gilds the hallowed pages of revelation. He is the light of the glorious gospel of the blessed God. His divine mind and will are revealed in and by the oracles of truth. The scriptures are full of the knowledge of Jesus, and they testify of him,

2. By the brightness of his divine example.

He arose upon our world as the sun of righteousness, and in his spirit and conversation, and in his holy and benevolent life, he gave mankind an exhibition of heavenly goodness and purity, and left an illuminated path to glory and eternal life. "He hath left us an example," &c. Practical godliness consists in hearing his voice and following him.

3. By the illuminating rays of his Spirit.

The Holy Spirit takes of the things of Jesus, and applies them to the mind. He is the spirit of light, and sheds abroad the beams of day and joy in the soul. Thus Jesus is the light of men. He is too the light of the world by his gospel. The light of the church by his spiritual residence in it. The light of the believer's soul, as the hope of glory. The light of heaven by the resplendent beams of his divine countenance.

APPLICATION.

1. Have we all partaken of that spiritual and gracious light which he diffuses? Are we the children of the light and the day? If so we shall reflect the light we have received, and diffuse it abroad to others.

2. Invite the benighted sinner to receive Christ and to walk in him.

XLIII.—CHRIST THE HEAD OF THE CHURCH.

"The head of the body, the church."—*Col.* i. 18.

THE church of the Redeemer is beautifully likened to the human body. Like the human body, it is composed of various parts and members. Some of these resemble the hands, others the feet, all of which united, make one compact body. Of this body, Jesus is the head.

I. *He is the Head exclusively.*

Angels may minister to it, and highly gifted and holy men may have official stations, but there is but one head, that is Christ. The pope therefore may be the head of the church of Rome, but not of the church of Jesus. Kings, and ecclesiastical powers, may form the headship of religious communities, but Jesus only is the head of his body, the church. "One is your master, even Christ," and all ye are brethren.

II. *As the Head, Christ is the Source of Vitality.*

From him, existence and energy are diffused through the whole system. There may be life without some of the inferior members, but separation from the head is immediate death. Thus we have life from, and by Christ. Out of him we are dead in him we are new-born creatures, and alive from the dead.

III. *As the Head, Christ is the Source of Knowledge and Wisdom.*

The head thinks, and devises, and plans for the body. The head is the seat of understanding and judgment. Thus Jesus is made unto his people *wisdom*, as well as

sanctification and redemption. In Christ dwells all the fulness of wisdom and knowledge, and from this boundless source all the need of his people is supplied.

IV. *As the Head, Christ is the Source of all Authority and Power.*

The head directs and governs the body. All the members are subordinate to the head. As the head is the residence of the mind, and as the material man is influenced by the spiritual, so with Jesus only, is the right to exert power, and to rule over every believer, being head over all things to his church.

V. *In reflecting on the Headship of the Church, we must be struck with its Dignity.*

How glorious—how illustrious—how divine is the church's head.

VI. *We are reminded also of its All-sufficiency.*

There can be no lack with such a head —no perplexity nor imbecility: the head of the church is emphatically *full* of grace and truth.

VII. *Neither ought we to forget the efficient Sympathy of this Head.*

Jesus, as the head of the body, feels all that his members suffer. He is touched with a feeling of all their infirmities, and he knows well how to succor and to support in temptations and trials,

"For he hath felt the same."

In all their afflictions he is afflicted, and whatever is done to them he considers it as done to himself: the most insignificant member cannot suffer without the sympathizing consciousness of the head.

APPLICATION.

The duties which devolve upon the members of the body to the head, obviously include,

1. *Sacred reverence:* to him belongs all honor and glory: we are to revere and honor him even as we revere and honor the Father: his glory we are to seek in all things, and whatever we do, we are to do it in his name

2. As the head, he also demands our *subjection* and *obedience:* we are his disciples only if we follow and obey him; if his grace influences our hearts, and if we rejoice to keep his commandments.

3. There must likewise be *conformity* and *resemblance* between the members and their head: as members of Jesus, we are partakers of his divine nature; "beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, we are changed into the same image from glory unto glory, even by the Spirit of the Lord." As we once possessed the image of the earthy, by grace we are renewed, and bear the image of the heavenly. How endearing, interesting, precious, and everlastingly momentous, is the union between Christ and his church!

4. How presumptuous for any to *arrogate power* and *authority* over the church of Jesus. "One is your master, even Christ," &c.

XLIV.—CHRIST THE BRIDEGROOM OF HIS CHURCH.

"He that hath the bride is the bridegroom."—*John* iii. 29.

The Baptist was bearing testimony to Christ when he made use of the language of the text. And similar representations are given of the Redeemer in various parts of the holy scriptures. The parable of the Virgins evidently refers to the coming of Christ as the bridegroom. The apostle in speaking to the church at Corinth, remarks, "I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ," 2 Cor. xi. 2. And John, in the visions of the Apocalypse, was invited by one of the seven angels to behold the bride, the Lamb's wife, Rev. xxi. 9. One of the most rich and striking parables of Jesus contains the same implied truth, where the gospel provision is represented as a feast, which a certain king made at the marriage of his son, Matt. xxii. 1, &c. We just premise, that the bride of Jesus is his church, composed of all renewed spiritual persons. That in conversion they are espoused to Christ, and that the marriage ceremony will be consummated with his perfected and glorious bride, when he shall come the second time, without a sin-offering, to the salvation of his people. Let us notice, then,

I. *How Jesus became the Bridegroom of his Church.*

Now he did so, both as the gift of the Father and as the voluntary act and choice of his infinitely blessed and benevolent mind. It was his own unbounded mercy and pity to man, which induced him to present himself as the bridegroom of his church. He so loved the church as to give

himself up for its redemption, and to purchase it by the shedding of his precious blood. In accomplishing this great act of grace it behooved him,

1. To assume the nature of the intended bride.

Thus he became wedded to our humanity. He became of one flesh and blood with us, in being made of a woman, and in becoming in reality a child of man, and, according to the promise, of the seed of Abraham. "And the word was made flesh," &c.

2. To remove all difficulties to the union.

These were of a threefold kind. There was guilt, pollution, and the curse. Each and all of these prevented the union of the holy and blessed Son of God with mankind. These he effectually took out of the way. He became our substituted sacrifice. He bare our sins. Became a curse for us. And opened a fountain for sin and uncleanness. He opened a clear and honorable channel for the remission of sin, the sanctification of the sinner, and thus his elevation to a dignity, worthy of being united to the Son of God. O how great the cost of the union to Jesus! He had to redeem his bride from misery, pollution, and death. And he did this by the voluntary sacrifice of himself. "And thus it was written, and thus it behooved Christ to suffer," &c. Well may the ransomed church in rapturous songs exclaim, Jnto him that loved us and washed us from our sins," &c., Rev. i. 5. Notice,

II. *What sort of Bridegroom Jesus is.*

He is one,

1. Of peerless dignity.

The Son of the most high God. The Lord of life and glory. The prince of the kings of the earth. The eternal Word, of light and being, John i. 1–14. The prince of the kings of the earth. The joy of angels, and the Lord of all. God's equal fellow and eternal delight. The governor of the universe, and proprietor of all things. Words utterly fail to describe his dignity or to reveal his glory.

2. Of matchless beauty.

All that is fair, and bright, and beautiful, is employed to show forth his loveliness. "Fairer than the children of men." "The desire of all nations." "Who is the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person." He is likened to the "rose of Sharon," and to the "bright and morning star."

3. Of boundless riches.

He is heir of all things. "The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hands." The treasures of nature, of grace, and glory, are all his. His riches are spread through immensity; they are infinite, exhaustless, and eternal

4. Of perfect goodness.

Every excellency is concentrated in him. His love passeth understanding. His tenderness is inexpressible. His compassion faileth not, and his mercy and loving-kindness endure forever and ever.

5. Of inviolable faithfulness.

Truth is the girdle of his reins. He is faithful and true. All his excellencies are, like his divine nature, immutable; "the same yesterday," &c. His mind alters not. His heart knows no change.

> "His love is as great as his power,
> And neither knows measure nor end"

Such is the character of Christ as the bridegroom of his church. We observe, that he also does for his people what no other bridegroom can do. He removes all her diseases, purifies her from all her impurities, transforms her into all the beauties of his own holy image, preserves from all enemies and perils, and saves unto all the glories of a blissful immortality and eternal life.

APPLICATION.

1. Let the church see its high and distinguished exaltation, and walk worthily before him. Let his love, and truth, and fidelity, be reciprocated. How believers should love, serve, and honor him!

2. Let sinners listen to the gracious invitations of the Saviour, and accept of his love. He invites them to be married to him. To partake of his grace, of his divine nature, of his immeasurable riches, and of his eternal glory. To this end, he has sent his word and his ministers to beseech and entreat them to be reconciled unto him.

3. None but those who have Christ as their bridegroom shall enter his kingdom, or enjoy his salvation

4. Let backsliders return to Christ, their "first husband," for then it was better with them than now.

XLV.- CHRIST A PHYSICIAN

"They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick."—*Matt.* ix. 12.

In the application of this proverb to himself, Jesus evidently professed to be a physician, and his whole ministerial career will establish that profession. Christ proved himself to be a physician of the body. He cured all sorts of diseases;—dropsies, fevers, palsies, blindness, deafness, leprosies, bloody issues, and dumbness, all fled before his healing power. It mattered not how deep, how complicated, how universal, or of how long standing, he never failed in restoring to perfect health and soundness. Many cases which were humanly speaking hopeless, he restored by he word of his power. His power was so extensive, that even death was forced to yield his prey at his command. One he brought to life from the bed on which she had just expired—a second as they were bearing him to the place of burial—and a third, after he had been entombed, heard his voice, and lived, and came forth. Jesus does not now employ his miraculous influence in healing the diseases of the body, but still his ability is the same. And though we are not called to expect his supernatural interposition in curing our bodily diseases, yet all human means will fail without his blessing.

We have seen that Jesus was a celebrated physician of the body, but he was equally successful in healing the maladies of the *mind*. In the wonder-working days of his flesh, he healed all sorts and degrees of mental and moral diseases. He cured the lunatic boy—he cured the demoniac, who dwelt among the tombs, and brought him to sit at his feet clothed, and in his right mind. But he also proved himself the physician of the *soul*.

I. *The Soul of Man is the Subject of Disease.*

Every faculty is impaired, every power disordered; the plague spot is upon it; the leprosy defiles it; the fever consumes it; it is affected with the torpid paralysis. The eyes of the mind are blinded, the ears stopped, and the tongue is speechless. The afflictions of the soul are hereditary,—complicated,—deep seated,—universally prevalent,—painful,—and absolutely fatal. They never exhaust their strength, or cure themselves,—neither are they curable by any human agency whatever. Now, of these otherwise incurable maladies,

II. *Jesus is the efficient Physician.*

1. His knowledge is infinite.

He knows the cause, the progress, and the precise state of the disease of the human heart.

2. His power is almighty.

There is nothing too hard for him to effect—he can eradicate the most virulent and confirmed disorders of the soul.

3. His tenderness is inexpressible.

He deeply commiserates the misery of sin-sick souls,—his bowels yearn over them,—his heart is full of tenderness towards them,—he does not want an application from them, but he seeks to heal, and says, "Wilt thou be made whole?"

4. His terms are astonishing.

He heals without money, and without price,—all he desires is the use of his medicines, and humble attention to the prescriptions he gives.

5. His success is infallible.

He never fails to effect a cure,—none ever sought his aid in vain. Though death had already commenced its ruinous work upon the dying malefactor, yet one word of his healed the malady of his soul, and saved him from the jaws of eternal death, and made him meet for the healthy abodes of the heavenly paradise.

6. As a physician, Christ's invitations are universal.

He does not confine his practice to any grade or class of society: the world is his hospital; and all mankind may become his patients: the poor are alike welcome with the rich: he healeth all who come unto him. Notice,

III. *The Method of Healing which he adopts.*

In curing the diseases of the soul,

1. He employs the agency of his word.

It is said he sent his word, and healed them: the word contains a revelation both of the disease and mode of cure: the word is emphatically the word of salvation—the word of life. He also employs,

2. The catholicon of his blood.

The blood of Jesus is the true balm of Gilead—that in which alone we have redemption, even the forgiveness of sin. It is this which speaks peace to the guilty mind, and which cleanseth from all unrighteousness.

3. By the power of his Spirit

The Spirit applies the precious blood of Christ to the heart, and thus the malady of sin is removed, and the soul is made whole.

APPLICATION.

1. The cure which Christ imparts to the sin-sick soul is radical, universal, and abiding. He heals every wound, and restores every faculty: he gives beauty for deformity; strength for weakness; and blooming health for sickness and decay.

2. How important that we ascertain our true state and condition. Hath he healed us? have we been convicted of sin—have we loathed it—and have we been delivered from it? Have we the signs of spiritual health upon us? do we live in the exercise of godliness? is the pain and smart, arising from consciousness of sin, removed? have we the indwelling of the Spirit testifying that we are the sons of God?

3. Let spiritual health be carefully cultivated. Avoid all that is pernicious to the soul. Cherish the influences of the Spirit, and thus grow in grace, and in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ.

4. The spiritually sick, who despise this physician, must inevitably perish. There is no other balm in Gilead, nor any other physician there.

XLVI.—CHRIST THE CAPTAIN OF SALVATION.

"And commander to the people."—*Isa.* lv. 4.

Sin commenced by the revolt of God's creatures from their allegiance and obedience to him. Angels thus fell, and kept not their first estate. Thus too did man unite himself to the fallen spirits of darkness, by yielding to Satan's temptation, and transgressing the laws of God. The honor of God, and the safety of holy beings, required that God should not allow sin to reign with impunity. He graciously compassionated the state of mankind, and by giving Christ, his beloved Son, as a sacrifice for guilt, has redeemed our fallen and helpless species unto himself. In carrying out this salvation, Jesus not only had to expire as the great sacrificial lamb, but to exert his almighty power, in destroying the works of the devil. In this great arduous work, Christ appears as a man of war. As the Bozrah conqueror—as the captain of salvation. The phrase commander, in the text evidently signifies a general, one who leads on the army—who goes forth at the head of his troops to conflict with an opposing foe; such is the character and work of Jesus, as the "commander to the people." Observe,

I. *The Cause in which Christ is engaged.* It is,

1. The cause of holiness against sin.

Christ came to vanquish the powers of wickedness. He came to overthrow ignorance and error, crime and pollution, prejudice and unbelief. He came to put down rebellion, treason, and disloyalty towards God, and to establish truth, and righteousness, and love and peace, throughout the earth. He designs the moral restoration of man to the holy image and Spirit of God.

2. The cause of happiness against misery.

A sinful state is one of wretchedness and misery. Jesus came to remove the cause, that the effects of depravity and guilt might cease. He designs the blessedness and consolation of man, by his emancipation from the yoke and service of the devil. Jesus scatters every kind of blessing in his course. He confers freedom and rest,—peace and joy in the Holy Ghost.

3. The cause of heaven against hell.

He is engaged to destroy the works of the devil. His kingdom is to overthrow it. Against his church the gates of hell are not to prevail. The power and authority of Satan and sin are to be overturned, and the reign of heaven to be established throughout the earth. All nations are to be blessed in him, and to call him blessed.

II. *The Qualifications which, as Captain, Christ possesses.*

1. Infinite knowledge and skill.

He knows every thing which concerns either his own troops or those of the enemy. His wisdom and skill embrace every subject, so that he cannot err, he never fails in his plans, nor is necessitated to alter his arrangements. He is never baffled, nor perplexed, nor confused. He discerns all things and knows all things, past, present, and future, as though they were directly before him. How surely then will all the guilt and craftiness of wicked men or their subtle leader Satan, be put to naught

1. Omnific energy and power.

His wisdom is associated with irresistible power. Power which can do every thing that is worthy of a holy and righteous being. In the days of his flesh he often manifested it in curing diseases, stilling the tempest, raising the dead, and expelling devils. The energy of Christ's power is diffused everywhere, sustaining and preserving that which is good and conformable to his will, and in overwhelming his foes with confusion and dismay.

3. Undaunted courage and valor.

He displayed these during the whole of his suffering life. He never turned aside from his holy purposes, nor ever feared what men or devils could do against him. He feared not Jewish conspirators, nor the Roman soldiery. He feared not Pilate, nor Herod and his men of war. He feared not, and his courage never failed amid the pressure of thorns on his temples, the scourging of his back, the nailing of his hands and feet, or the piercing of his side. He did once indeed fear, but it was not the power of earth or hell; when he feared, it was when the cup of expiation was presented, and then he prayed, and was delivered from that fear, Heb. v. 7. As commander, he was distinguished

4. For unbounded tenderness and love.

Towards his ransomed devoted troops, he displays the greatest and most ardent affection. He bears with their frailties. Never withdraws his compassionate regards. Amply provides for their comfort and well-being. Never forsakes nor leaves them to their own resources, but causes his loving-kindness to surround them continually. "A bruised reed," &c., Heb. iv. 14, 15. Observe then,

III. *The Spirit and Practice which his Soldiers should evince.*

1. Affectionate confidence and trust.

Of this he is most worthy. This he requires. To feel this and to exercise it constantly, is both for the happiness and welfare of his troops. "Trust in the Lord Jehovah," &c.

A firm relying persuasion of his skill, and power, and faithfulness, and love, will cheer and animate the Christian, amid all the struggles of the arduous warfare.

2. Devoted obedience and attention.

Christ must be the model, the object of the Christian soldier's constant study and imitation. Jesus must be followed. We must walk in his steps. Hear and obey his words. Imbibe his spirit. And walk even as he walked.

3. Unshaken and persevering activity.

The Christian's life is one, not only of professed, but real active conflict and warfare. The soldiers of Christ, therefore, must fight and struggle, till every foe is vanquished, and every enemy destroyed. They must go forth with Christ from conquering to conquest. Fight the good fight, until they receive the crown of life.

APPLICATION.

We notice,

1. The warfare of the Christian is one of certain victory and triumph.

2. Invite men to fight under the standard of Jesus.

3. The enemies of Christ shall be confounded and covered with everlasting shame.

XLVII.—CHRIST THE WAY TO HEAVEN

"I am the way."—*John* xiv. 6.

THE Christian is professedly a pilgrim, a pilgrim on his way to glory. He is seeking a better country, that is to say, a heavenly one. He looks upward beyond the glittering starry skies, and sings,

"There is my house and portion fair,
My treasure and my heart are there,
And my abiding home."

To this world of happiness and rest, Jesus is the way,

I. *By the revelation he gave of it.*

A clear description of that blessed world was never given until Jesus was manifested in the flesh, and brought life and immortality to light by his gospel. He spoke of it in the most plain and familiar terms, called it his "father's house," the place of many mansions. And on some occasions he referred to its purity, and its celestial glory. How splendid must the imperial palace of Jehovah be!—the seat of his heavenly court, the residence of his spiritual and glorious hosts, where he is seated on his high and lofty throne, in overwhelming splendor of eternal light. To dwell in the presence of God, is supreme felicity and eternal life. Here is fulness of joy, and pleasures for evermore.

II. *Christ is the Way also, because he only can confer the Title to the Possession of Heaven.*

Heaven is the inheritance, and we become heirs through the justifying grace of Jesus. By faith in his mediatorial work, we become the sons of God, and joint heirs with Jesus Christ.

III. *Jesus also imparts the Meetness necessary to its Enjoyment.*

Before it can be enjoyed, we must be made meet; this he effects by the cleansing power of his blood, as communicated by the sanctifying influences of the Holy Spirit. Thus he makes us partakers of his own nature, and renders us capable of participating in his glory.

IV. *Then he is the Way, as he is our glorious Leader and Example.*

He is the guide of his people, and he hath left us an example, that we should follow his steps. O yes, he, as our forerunner, has gone before, and has opened a new and living way into the holiest place, and hath consecrated it for us, by his precious blood. No man can come to the possession of the Father's favor on earth, or the possession of the glory he bestows in heaven, but through him.

V. *Jesus is the only Way to eternal Glory.*

There is but one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus. He is the one immutable foundation, the rock of ages, and other foundation can no man lay, than that is laid, which is Christ. To him, as the way, all the prophets testified; and John, as his illustrious harbinger and herald, proclaimed him as the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sins of the world. It is the especial work of the ministry, to point inquiring penitent souls to Jesus, as the only refuge and saviour from the wrath to come. And in doing this, the distinguishing features of this way must be specified.

(1) Its *freeness* must be proclaimed; that it is not restricted to a select few of mankind, but that Christ is the saviour of all men, especially of them that believe. That there is no condition, natural or moral, which can exclude from Jesus and his salvation, but the self-willed and persevering exercise of unbelief. He hath declared that whosoever cometh unto him he will in no wise cast out.

(2) Then its *gratuitousness* must be announced. As it is free to all, so it is free to all on he most gracious terms; there is no moral fitness required. No meritorious service is demanded. Unworthy, wretched, and truly despicable, rebellious sinners may approach Jesus as they are, for

> "All the fitness he requireth,
> Is to feel their need of him."

(3) Then it is a way of *sure* and *certain blessedness.* All who have received Jesus and walk in him, possess peace and joy in the Holy Ghost. Their course infallibly tends to eternal life. No evil can come near them, no mischief can befall them; abiding in him they cannot perish, neither can any pluck them out of his hands. They go from strength to strength,—every one of them at last appears before God in the celestial Zion.

> "Jesus, my Lord, thou only art
> Salvation's blessed way,
> Oh, cheer my heart, and keep my feet
> Unto eternal day."

XLVIII.—CHRIST THE WONDERFUL.

"And his name shall be called Wonderful."—*Isa.* ix. 6.

When the angel of the Lord (doubtless none other than the Son of God) appeared to Manoah, and was asked his name, he said, "Why askest thou thus after my name, seeing it is *secret* or *wonderful*," Judges iii. 18. Now this is the very title the evangelical prophet is here applying to the Redeemer: his name, he says, shall be called Wonderful. How truly applicable is this title to Christ! He is wonderful in every respect in which he can be contemplated. As the Deity, he must of course be past finding out. But he is wonderful in all that relates to his mediatorial person, offices, and work.

I. *Consider the wonderful Constitution of his Person.*

Jehovah-Jesus, God manifest in the flesh Eternity united to a span of human existence. Omnipotence dwelling in the weakness of our manhood. The great and most high God assuming human form, and really allied, by the most mysterious of all unions, to a nature which had become degraded and worthless, by reason of transgression Then, too, how wonderful, that notwithstanding that union, his own purity and dignity remained unaffected; he partook not of one feature of our depravity, or of one sinful infirmity. How marvellous indeed that the glory of Jehovah of hosts should be enshrined in a tabernacle of flesh

dwell amongst us, that the splendor of his divinity should be beheld, as the glory of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. In the mysterious formation of Christ's human nature, the Holy Ghost employed his miraculous influence in a way unknown before, and thus produced a divinely glorious personage, who is the wonder both of heaven and earth. O let us contemplate the character of our adorable and wonderful Jesus. Here our thoughts may be employed to our real profit and abiding welfare. Here is a mystery, which prophets and apostles, yea, and angels, have endeavored to explore, but in vain.

> "'Tis mystery all, let men adore,
> And angel minds inquire no more."

II. *Wonderful in the Offices which he assumed.*

In previous ages, God had separated his servants to various duties and pursuits. Some had filled the prophetical, others the priestly, and others the kingly office. Some were rulers over the people, others teachers, and others the generals, or leaders of their armies. In Christ all these offices centred, on him all these duties devolved. He was emphatically the prophet of the most high God, the priest after the order of Melchisedec, and Zion's great and glorious king. He came to rule over his people, to instruct the ignorant, and to be the illustrious captain of salvation. And he possessed all the requisites for these various offices, and that in the most perfect degree. He was copiously anointed with the spirit of prophecy, and knew all things The sacred unction rested on his priestly head in all its sanctifying plenitude. Wisdom, power, and essential dignity contributed to elevate him as the King of kings, and Lord of lords. His rule was associated with perfect and infallible knowledge, and spotless justice and equity. As a teacher, he spake and taught as no man ever else did; he spake with divine authority and power, so that the people were astonished at his doctrine, and exclaimed, 'Never man spake like this man." And as the captain of God's sacred host, he went forth to conflict, and spoiled all his foes, and returned to his throne, as the Bozrah conqueror, terrible to his adversaries, yet mighty to save. Oh the amazing combination of qualities in our wonderful Redeemer! Greatness and humility, courage and meekness, power and voluntarily assumed weakness, glory and abasement, riches and poverty, holy, wise, omnipotent, and eternal, yet accounted base, utterly worthless, and at last actually despised and put to death.

III. *He is also wonderful in the Titles by which he is set forth.*

He is the great, mighty, and only true and wise God. He is the prince of the kings of the earth—the Lord of armies—the only living and true potentate—king of kings—governor of the nations—and proprietor of the universe. Before him the loftiest seraphs bend, and all the angels of God worship him. The Father speaks of him as his fellow, his eternal delight, and says unto him, "Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever." All ascriptions of praise, and blessing, and honor, and power, and glory, and rule, and dominion, are presented to him by the intellectual hosts of glory, incessantly:

> "Before his feet the countless hosts
> Of seraphim do fall,
> And, with profoundest awe, unite
> To crown him Lord of all."

IV. *He is wonderful in all his Works.*

His works are those of true and essential divinity. He hath created all things by the energy of his omnific voice, and he upholdeth all things by the word of his power. Here then Christ appears before us in all the inconceivable greatness and grandeur of his boundless operations and works. Who then can understand his wonderful character, or by searching, find him out to perfection? Oh the depths of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! And yet in redemption it appears that he has exceeded all his other works, that here has been a mightier and grander display of his essential and infinite perfections; hence, says the poet,

> "Our thoughts are lost in reverend awe,
> We love and we adore;
> The first archangel never saw,
> So much of God before"

O yes, in redemption we have not the hidings, but the manifestations of his glory and power; here is not a partial, but a full display of the glories of the divine nature

> "Here the whole Deity is known,
> Nor dares the creature guess,
> Which of the glories brightest shone
> The justice or the grace."

V. *Christ's Love is wonderful.*

If we consider the objects of his love, now sinful, wretched, and unworthy they were of the least favorable regard. Yet he pitied, and had compassion even on the ungodly. And the intensity of his love towards us is wonderful. He loved us with a love altogether unparalleled and unknown. He loved us so much as to yield himself a free atoning sacrifice for our guilt. Loved us more than he loved the dignities and joys of his glorious and imperial palace. Herein is love; love setting all description and all human conception utterly at defiance,—love that passeth all understanding.

VI. *His sufferings were wonderful.*

Well might he be called, "A man of sorrows and acquainted with griefs." How varied, yet how deeply intense were his sufferings! He suffered poverty, calumny, and hatred; he was bitterly persecuted, falsely charged, unjustly tried, and wickedly condemned to die. He was scourged, buffeted, spit upon, and nailed to the cross. In dying, he was ridiculed, taunted, and mocked. Earth and heaven seemed combined to cause the waters of affliction to cover his sacred spirit, and the waves of trouble, in successive rolling billows, went over his blessed head.

"Oh, Lamb of God! was ever love,
Was ever grief like thine?"

His life in all its stages was wonderful. From the announcement of his incarnation, to his last shout upon the cross, there was one continued series of great and astonishing events. He spake as never man spake; he lived, and prayed, and blessed men, in a way peculiar to himself. He arose upon our world, as the great and wonderful orb of spiritual day; and in a sky of sable blackness—except as it was streaked with the crimson of his precious blood—he set on Calvary's elevated and solemn summit Christ is,

VII. *Wonderful in his Triumphs.*

He triumphed over all his adversaries. Over sin and Satan. Over death and the grave. He is the Bozrah conqueror, "Mighty to save."

APPLICATION.

1. How worthy is Jesus of our highest admiration.

2. How deserving of our most exalted praises.

3. How suitable as the foundation of our peace, and hope, and salvation.

4. How supremely should we love and serve him.

XLIX.—CHRIST A COUNSELLOR.

"Counsellor."—*Isa.* ix. 6.

We now have to consider the second illustrious title of the Messiah, of whom it is said, "The government shall be on his shoulders." The spirit of prophecy testified of Christ as the "Counsellor," Prov viii. 14; and Isa. ii. 2. Let us ascertain,

I. *Wherein he has exhibited himself as our Counsellor.*

He did so,

1. In the council regarding the redemption of our world.

With us there is time past, present, &c.; with Jehovah all things, as it were, are before him. Now, it is clear that God foresaw the entrance of sin and ruin into our world. It is clear also that he benevolently contemplated its deliverance from sin, and the power of the evil one. Now this is often spoken of as the council wherein the agreement was formed and the covenant made. None in heaven could be found sufficient for the undertaking, until Jesus, one of the council, said, "Lo I come," &c. This council seems clearly intimated in Isa. liii., where both the sufferings and reward of the Messiah seem determined.

2. In the council respecting the creation of our world.

This event, and especially that of forming man, seem to have been decided in council. The language found in the book of Proverbs, viii. 22, is generally ascribed to the Son of God. And here Christ was appointed to have creative power and universal authority, &c. Now there are four places in the holy scriptures where the plural number is used in respect to Deity, and which implies council, Gen. i. 26, iii. 22, xi. 7; Isa. vi. 8.

3. In his actual work when he brought life and immortality to light by the gospel

He came to give counsel to a lost world He came to make known the way of peace The way of salvation and eternal life Wherever he went he appeared as a counsellor from heaven. And he was such to

all persons. He counselled both the Pharisees and the publicans, the religious and the profane.

4. In his especial counsels to his believing disciples.

How often he conversed, &c. with these, with all affection, with all tenderness and simplicity. He spoke to them what he did not to the world. For them he had especial instruction. So also now he manifests, &c. He anointed them with the holy unction, &c. So the Asiatic churches, Rev. iii. 18.

5. In his personal counsels and pleadings with his Father on our behalf.

That solemn prayer, which is recorded throughout the seventeenth chapter of John, is a striking evidence of this. So also he says again, John xiv. 15, "I will pray the Father," &c. So says the same apostle, "If any man sin," &c. See also Rom. viii. 33.

II. *The peculiar Characteristics of Christ as our Counsellor.* Now,

1. He possesses infallible knowledge.

Of the mind of God and the heart of man. Of all that relates to us, both as it regards time and eternity. In him dwelt all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

2. He possesses immutable rectitude.

Justice, purity, and truth, are the perfections of his nature.

3. He possesses unbounded influence.

Him the Father always heareth. In pleading with God for us, he has the firmest grounds of appeal to the Father,—his office,—his merits,—his glory, &c.

4. He is distinguished for his unfailing tenderness and compassion.

He makes the case of every disciple his own. "In all their afflictions," &c. He sympathizes in all their distresses, and bears all their sicknesses. And he never tires, never is wearied, and never forsakes his people.

APPLICATION.

Learn,

1. The privilege of the true Christian. Christ the counsellor is his Lord and friend. Now we must use him as such or we dishonor him. In difficulty. In temptation. In sorrow. When the enemy has injured you. In despondency, &c. Go to him. Go humbly believing, confiding

2. Let the backslider regard his counsels. How unwilling he is to give you up &c.

3. Let the sinner also hearken. "Come unto me," &c.

4. Let the incorrigible enemy tremble Hear the voice of God respecting his anointed, Ps. ii. 10, &c.

L.—CHRIST THE FOUNDATION.

"For a foundation."—*Isa.* xxviii. 16.

THE prophet is clearly referring to the Messiah in the text. The apostle Paul, speaking of the believer, likens him "to a house, and as an habitation of God through the Spirit." He is also likened to a temple, "know ye not that ye are the temple of God." Now these metaphorical statements show the connection and propriety of Christ being set forth as a foundation, see 1 Cor. iii. 11.

I. *Let us then notice of what Christ is the Foundation.*

1. Now Christ is the foundation of the sinner's acceptance with God.

God cannot be merciful to man, consistently with the demands of his holiness, justice, and truth, except in and through Jesus Christ. Christ's holiness, obedience, and merits, are the only grounds on which God is propitious to the sinner: so that Jesus is the only foundation of pardoning mercy, and justifying grace.

2. Christ is the foundation of the believer's peace.

Hence he is called, "Our peace," Eph. ii. 14. Jesus came and preached peace. When he arose from the dead, he imparted peace to his disciples. "And being justified by faith, we have *peace* with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ." He is the foundation of all sorts of peace. By him, angels are at peace with us. God is at peace with us. And we have peace with conscience, the peace of God within us, which passeth all understanding.

3. Christ is the foundation of hope.

We are begotten again to a lively hope by the resurrection of Christ from the dead. Christ's blessed gospel has brought life and immortality to light. Christ's merits have laid a solid and honorable basis for their bestowment. And his great and precious promises respecting them, give the believer a hope unspeakably bright, and full of glory.

4. Christ is the foundation of eternal life.

He died, rose again and ascended into heaven, that we might obtain eternal life. He gives unto his sheep eternal life. We have eternal life in his name. "And this is the record that God hath given unto us eternal life, and this life is in his Son."

5. He is also the foundation of his collective and universal church.

The church is likened to a temple and to a city, of which Jesus is the glorious basis. He is the rock on which his church is built, and against which the gates of hell shall never prevail. Holy men, and prophets, and apostles, are all stones in this superstructure, but Christ alone is laid, as the foundation, who bears all its massy weight,—on which it entirely rests. And whether we consider the church, in its militant state on earth, or in its glorified and triumphant state in heaven, Christ is the basis of the whole. Each and all of God's spiritual family, from the new-born babe on earth, to the most exalted beatific spirit in glory, rest wholly upon Christ as the foundation.

II. *What are the distinguishing Characters of this Foundation?*

1. Christ is God's elect and precious foundation.

He is the select and chosen of God; and he is essentially and infinitely precious.

2. He is a strong foundation.

Omnipotence is one of his attributes. He is the Almighty: both the wisdom and power of God. So strong that it is probable that myriads of worlds are upheld by him. He is a suitable foundation. In him God is glorified, and the sinner honorably saved. He is high enough to shed eternal lustre on all the perfections of the Deity, and low enough to meet the sinner's state, and amply to supply all his exigencies.

3. He is a universal foundation.

Hence a guilty world is to be directed to him, and every creature invited to build upon him.

4. He is a perpetual foundation.

In all ages believers have rested upon him. Our parents were directed to him in the first promise; Abel built upon it, and died a martyr for his faith in him. Abraham built upon him, and seeing his day, though afar off, rejoiced and was glad. Prophets and all the holy men of old rested their hopes on him, who in the fulness of the times should come, who is the Christ of God, blessed for evermore. And through all the ages which have passed since his actual appearance to the present, and through all the periods which shall elapse, to the grand and final consummation, he is, and shall be, the one great, and only foundation. As a foundation Christ comes to us,

5. As having been tried, and as always sufficient.

How many have built upon mere *doctrines* and *sentiments*, upon *creeds* and *systems*; but in the day of distress, when they wanted comfort, their foundation being only nominal, merely theoretical, they have been left in wretchedness and despondency. How many have built on the *abstract mercy* of *God*, but when their foundation was tested, they have found out that Jehovah is just as well as merciful, and he will by no means clear the guilty. How many have built upon their own *works*, upon their *self righteousness*, and have only been awakened time enough to discover, that all their goodness is as filthy rags. But all who have tried Jesus have found him a sufficient foundation. And how extensively has he been tried. In all ages thousands have rested all their hopes upon him. He has been tried by all classes and grades of men. By the rich, and by the poor; by the learned, and by the illiterate; by the savage, and by the refined; by the moralist, and by the profligate; and they have all realized in him, an all-sufficient foundation. He has proved all-sufficient, for all times, and places, and occurrences,—he has been tried in prosperity, and in adversity,—he has been tried in youth, and in old age,—he has been tried in health, and in sickness,—he has been tried in life, and in death. And in all diversities of state, they who have trusted in him have never been confounded. His sufficiency has been tested, under reproach, persecution, distress, at the stake, and at the block; and so strong has it been, that pain has been found as ease, and death in its most terrific forms embraced, in the hope of a better resurrection

APPLICATION.

1. Let the Christian abide on this foundation; be not moved from the hope of the gospel.

2. The sinner's peace, happiness, and eternal well-being depend upon the acceptance or rejection of this foundation.

LI.—CHRIST A KING.

"There is another king, one Jesus."—*Acts* xvii. 7.

THE kingship of Jesus was both extensively typified and predicted in the old testament scriptures. Melchisedec was an eminent type of Jesus, combining in himself both the office of priest and king. David and Solomon too were both types of the royalty of Jesus. The prophets also predicted of him as the "King of glory," Ps. xxiv. 8; "King of Zion," Jer. viii. 19; "A mighty king," xi. 3. He is called, "David their king," Hosea iii 5. And "King over all the earth," Zech. xiv. 9. Christ also confessed to Pilate, that he was a king, but that his kingdom was not of this world.

I. *Consider the kingly Character of Jesus.*

Considered in the divinity of his person, he is universal king. King of kings and Lord of lords. In this sense, his empire extends to heaven, and earth, and hell. All creatures, and all worlds belong to his illimitable empire, and of his dominion there is no end. But we now especially consider him in his mediatorial office, as reigning in the midst of the Zion of his church.

(1) His kingdom consists of two branches; that of the *spirits* of the just in heaven, and that of all true believers on earth.

(2) His palace is in glory, where he has his great and exalted throne, where the homage of countless attendants is constantly paid to him.

(3) His laws and statutes are revealed in his word, and the gospel is his royal sceptre, the rod of his strength.

(4) The officers of his kingdom are the pastors and teachers of his church, who are to publish his laws, and to enforce the discipline of his kingdom.

(5) All who truly believe in him, and unfeignedly love him, are his subjects; on he throne of their willing hearts he sits, and sways the sceptre of his grace. It will thus appear, that his kingdom is not confined by local bounds, or geographical limits, but in whatever nation or country, or of whatever people, or clime, or color believers are found there is his spiritual empire, there he reigns as king of his universal Zion. Notice,

II. *The Characteristics of Christ's kingly Office.*

Jesus Christ as a king is possessed of the most illustrious distinctions and titles.

1. He is the king immortal.

He has life in himself—he ever liveth—he had no beginning of years, or end of days—he claims the prerogative of absolute immortality and self existence—he is the "I am,"—the "Jehovah of hosts," and besides him there is none else

2. He is the king invisible.

He once appeared in our world and tabernacled amongst us, and his glory was beheld, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth, but now he is removed from our mortal vision, having entered into the holiest place of all, where he ever appears in the presence of God for us.

3. He is the king eternal.

His reign shall be everlasting, and of his dominion there shall be no end.

4. He is the king of kings.

His providence extends to all the affairs of earth. By him kings reign. By him all the complex machinery of governments is overruled and directed.

5. He is the king of glory

He dwelleth in glory. His throne is in the highest heaven. All the glorious hosts adore before him. All the angels of heaven worship him. For this king we should cultivate feelings of profoundest reverence and veneration. To him in all things we should be subject. His will is supreme and unchangeably binding in its obligations on all his disciples.

6. He is a righteous and equitable king.

He is the holy and just one. He reigns not as a usurper, his dominion is not based on iniquity, but in eternal righteousness and truth. His name is the "Lord our righteousness." "A sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of his kingdom." "Righteousness is the girdle of his loins."

7. He is a bountiful and benevolent king.

His goodness is associated with all his acts, and all his engagements,—his goodness is over all his works. He reigns to diffuse his goodness —

"Blessings abound where'er he reigns,
The pris'ner leaps to lose his chains,
The weary find eternal rest,
And all the sons of want are blest."

8. He is also a gracious and merciful king.

Grace is poured into his lips,—he is full of grace and truth,—the sceptre he sways is a sceptre of mercy,—he delighteth in mercy,—his mercy extends to his greatest enemies. It abounded to Saul of Tarsus as a pattern or example of what it could effect, and to whom it could extend. Those whom we should have supposed had totally excluded themselves from the possibility of his favor, were the first to whom the gospel message of mercy and grace was sent. Remission of sins was to be preached to all nations, but first of all, "beginning at Jerusalem."

APPLICATION.

1. The throne he now occupies is one of grace, to which the vilest may have access by repentance and faith, and obtain mercy and grace to help them in time of need.

2. Let the children of Zion be joyful in their king

3. Let the sinner be exhorted to "kiss the Son lest he be angry, and he perish from the way, when his anger is kindled but a little," Ps. ii. 11.

LII.—CHRIST A TEACHER.

"And seeing the multitudes, he went up into a mountain, and when he was set, his disciples came unto him, and he opened his mouth and taught them."—*Matt.* v. 1, 2.

One great end of Christ's coming into our world was to illuminate it with the light of life, and to show unto men the way of salvation. As such, his appearing had been predicted. Moses had said, 1400 years before, "the Lord thy God will raise unto thee a prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren like unto me, unto him shall ye hearken." Thus too the apostle prefaces his epistle to the Hebrew believers, "God who at sundry times and in divers manners spake," &c., Hebrews i. 1 2. Let us then consider,

I. *The Character of Jesus as a Teacher.*

Now as a teacher he has been properly styled the great Teacher. Greater than the prophets. Greater and higher than the angels.

1. He possessed infinite knowledge and wisdom.

The knowledge of all created beings must be limited. His was unbounded He knew all things, nothing could be hid from him. As the creator of worlds, the universe was all as transparent light before him. He knew all the mind of God. He knew all concerning the heavenly world. He knew all concerning man—concerning death. As such he is styled "God only wise." In him was hidden all the treasures of knowledge and wisdom. The wisest of prophets only had knowledge revealed unto them in small portions, but he had the fountain within himself.

2. He was possessed of infinite holiness and truth.

Not only was he so in essence, but in spirit, conversation, and practice. Moses was a good man, but by anger he disgraced his office, and excluded himself from the promised land. So Elijah and the whole of the prophets were fallible, erring men. But he embodied his own religion. He lived and exhibited every precept. His character was blameless. He was pure and holy, undefiled and separate from sinners. He reflected the spotless purity of the Godhead.

3. He was distinguished for unbounded goodness and love.

His errand, his whole work, was one of love. It was this that brought him to seek and to save, &c. He went about doing good. His design was to bless, to make men wise, and holy, and happy. He came to open a pathway to the heavenly world. He had nothing in his heart but pure, disinterested, and universal love. Hence when he began his work, he stated the nature of his mission. "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me," &c., Luke iv. 18.

4. He displayed the greatest condescension and patience.

He became the teacher both of the people and the rabbies. He stooped down to their residences, occupations, and capacities. He went to the sea-side and taught fishermen, laborers in the field, beggars on the highway. A poor Samaritan woman at the well. His discourses were always suited to the people—plain, simple, &c. He did not upbraid. He did not exhibi

any pomp. He did not break the bruised reed, &c.

5. He enforced and ratified all by divine power and authority.

He taught in his own name. He spake as one having authority, &c. He said, "I say unto you." He assumed the supremacy, and enforced all by unparalleled signs and miracles. Prodigies and wonders attended his steps. He healed the sick, cured lepers, restored the paralytic, expelled devils, awed the elements, and raised the dead. The people often were overwhelmed, and exclaimed, "What manner of man is this," &c. His promises too were more splendid, and his threatenings more terrific, than those of any other teacher. Heaven he opened to his disciples, and showed the gates of hell to obstinate unbelievers. Consider,

II. *The Subjects of his Instructions.*

1. His instructions were all-important.

Nothing trifling, nothing of a secondary kind. He taught great truths, relating to the soul and to eternity. His subjects were chiefly heavenly and eternal. He left nature, science, politics, and commerce, to others. He revealed the glories of the heavenly world, and showed how we might make them our own forever.

2. His instructions were chiefly practical.

He stated some few points of doctrine, but how seldom were those introduced. His truths were not ceremonial but practical. He told men how to live. How to act towards his Father, towards himself, and towards each other. He spake of the spirit we possess, the tempers we should cherish, the conversation we should cultivate, and the actions we should practise.

3. His subjects were perfect and abiding.

He introduced no temporary customs. No mutable ordinances. No local institutions. He was to be the last, and therefore the perfection, of all that teachers had revealed from God. His truths were to abide forever. So his morals—so his worship—so his ordinances,—baptism, Lord's supper, &c. Nothing deficient—nothing misplaced—nothing redundant in all he taught. He introduced the perfect day, and nothing shall be brighter but the light of heaven. Consider,

III. *The Claims of Christ as a Teacher.*

1. Profound reverence.

This a prophet would deserve — an angel more. How much more then God's Son,—his equal—his fellow; especially when we remember he is the appointed judge of quick and dead; his voice will decide the destiny of every creature.

2. Peculiar and intense attention.

Our every interest is at stake; our peace —comfort—life—salvation. If we neglect him it will be our everlasting loss. On his lips hang life—death—heaven—and hell.

3. The highest gratitude.

His love, his kindness, his mercy—all claim this. Our interests he ever consulted, not his own; for us he said and suffered all things.

4. Prompt obedience.

This is the end of all. To obey him—always—in all things—from the heart—with the whole life. To know, in order to do his will.

APPLICATION.

1. Address disciples.
2. Inquirers draw near
3. Unbelievers tremble.
4. Hear Christ on all subjects and at all times.

LIII.—CHRIST THE SUN OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

"But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings."—*Mal.* iv. 2.

THE sacred writers, in exhibiting the character and work of Jesus, are compelled to adopt the language of metaphor, and by referring to the various objects of nature, faintly to set forth his beauties and glory. The earth, and sea, and sky, are exhausted of their wonders, to accomplish this great design. The rock exhibits his stability and strength. The vine his fruitfulness and the lily rose his purity and beauty He is the pearl of great price. The fountain of living water. He is the morning star; and the true light—the light of the world. In the text, the prophet Malachi exhibits him as the sun of righteousness, &c. Notice,

I. *The Metaphor.*

"The sun of righteousness." Jesus may be fitly likened to the sun,

1. On account of his unity.

In creation we have many stars—many

seas—many trees and flowers; but there is only one sun. He has no compeer,—no rival or assistant illuminator. So in the celestial world there are many angels, seraphim and cherubim, of various ranks, and orders, and offices, but there is only one essential Son of God,—one Jesus,—one mediator between God and man,—the man Christ Jesus.

2. On account of his greatness and magnificence.

The accounts given by astronomers of the orb of day, as to his size, are sublime and overwhelming. The centre of the solar system, he appears the monarch of the whole, diffusing his glories around. Now Christ is most emphatically the Most High. Higher than the sons of men. His greatness is unsearchable. His nature is above the nature of angels. His name is greater than theirs. His throne is the most exalted, and around him move all the shining ranks of glory, and his brightness fills heaven with joy and gladness.

3. On account of the universality of his influences.

The beams of the sun are common to every part of our world, and there is nothing hid from the heat thereof. He shines upon the mountain and the valley. Upon the sterile desert and the fruitful vineyard. Upon the monarch's palace and the peasant's cottage. How applicable to the sun of righteousness! He is God's great gift to the whole world. Designed for the benefit of the universal family of man. The Saviour of all men, but especially of them that believe. He has shone upon every part of our earth. Asia, Africa, Europe, and America, have alike enjoyed his gladsome rays. He shines on men irrespective of their earthly distinctions; the beggar is free to enjoy his light, while kings come to the brightness of his rising.

4. On account of the nature of his benefits.

(1) He is the fountain of light. Clouds, and darkness, and night, are chased before him. He introduces light and day. So, also, the sun of righteousness, he banishes the shades of night, and introduces the moral and spiritual day. To him we are indebted for the light of knowledge, the light of happiness, the light of holiness, and the light of heaven.

(2) He is the source of beauty. The various hues and tints of flowers and plants, are owing to their absorbing, in different quantities, the peculiar properties of light Without his rays, nature would be one vast and gloomy blank. So Christ is the source of all moral and spiritual beauty. He transforms the mind into the divine image. He arrays the soul in all the celestial beauties of holiness.

(3) He is the cause of vegetation. The light and rays of the sun are necessary for the fruitfulness of the earth. He removes the dreary, barren appearance of winter, and produces the enlivening spring, the fruitful summer, and the gathering of autumn. All the fruits of righteousness are produced by Christ. "Without me ye can do nothing." Hence he is not only called the sun of righteousness, because of his essential purity, but also because he maketh his people righteous. He is made unto them "wisdom, righteousness," &c. He makes the stony heart soft and fertile, until it brings forth fruit as the garden of the Lord. Observe,

II. *The Declaration.*

"The sun of righteousness shall," &c Now, as the sun of righteousness,

1. He arose upon our world in the day of his nativity.

The hemisphere had been faintly illumined by the stars of types, sacrifices, and prophecies, all of which were precursors of approaching day, the day of the world's light and redemption. At last the eventful period arrived, the fulness of the times when God sent his Son, &c. Then Zacharias sang, "Through the tender mercy of our God," &c., Luke i. 78. Thus he brought life and immortality into light &c.

2. He arises upon the benighted mind in the day of conversion.

He opens the eyes of blind sinners. When they feel their misery, and cry to him, &c. Night ends, darkness is dispelled, and the day of grace begins in the soul, 2 Cor. iv. 6.

3. He will arise upon the world in the day of his second advent.

Hence we read of the brightness of his coming. His glorious appearance. "Behold, he cometh with clouds," &c. Then will be the morning of the saints' coronation. His rays will enter every grave, and irradiate every sepulchre. Then he will come to be glorified in his saints, and admired by all them that believe Notice.

III. *Those who will be benefited by the Saviour's Rising.*

"That fear his name." Now, the fear referred to is a holy filial fear, which produces a regard for his authority and laws. Such a fear as is associated with love and obedience. Like Noah's. Where this is not, Christ will be rejected, and his benefits despised. Not to fear him, is a sign of an unbelieving and rebellious mind. This fear the penitent has, and is tremblingly alive to his safety. This fear the believer has, and he cherishes it, and ever keeps it in his heart.

APPLICATION.

1. Are you the characters?
2. Has Christ arisen upon you?
3. There is no saving light but that which he communicates.

LIV.—CHRIST THE BEST FRIEND

"A friend that sticketh closer than a brother"—*Prov.* xviii. 24.

To none can these words be so truly applicable as to Jesus. His conduct was so gracious, and his Spirit so benign and condescending, that his enemies proclaimed him "A friend of publicans and sinners." In this they rightly set him forth—it was his delight; the joy of his heart, to exhibit the fulness of his love to the wretched worthless children of men. Nothing has more frequently been the topic of conversation, the subject of eulogium, and the theme of song, than friendship. Striking instances have been recorded on the pages of history, and handed down for the admiration of posterity. Friendship has been represented under the idea of one heart and spirit animating and influencing two bodies. An appropriate illustration of true affection and kindredness of soul which forms the very essence of true friendship. Let us,

I. *Take a view of the Evidences of the Friendship of Christ to Man.*

This was seen,

1. In the compassion and pity which he felt towards our apostatizing race.

He saw man guilty, self-ruined, ungodly, perishing. Without a plea of self-vindication. Without one redeeming trait of character, or one reason why the displeasure of his affronted Lord, should not descend upon him But even then Christ's heart moved with compassion, and his bowels yearned in mercy over his guilty creatures

2. In the purposes which he formed for his redemption.

All his thoughts, and purposes, and counsels, were fraught with friendliness and love. He saw his misery, and contemplated and purposed his recovery. He committed himself to his rescue and salvation. He resolved to pass by all his repulsive foulness and pollution, and to adopt an expedient for his purification and help.

3. In the means he employed for his salvation.

He became surety for him. He engaged to be his Redeemer. He clothed himself with our nature, and thus became our true brother. Then he gave himself as the voluntary victim to bear, in his own body, our sins upon the tree. He left glory, and riches, and praises, and honor, and divine blessedness, and became abased, and vilified, and poor, and the subject of scorn, and malice, and hatred, and, above all, died a malefactor's death, to secure riches, and bliss, and honor, and eternal life, for mankind.

4. In the blessings which he obtained for his enjoyment.

These are various, and include all good both for body and soul. They comprehend the unsearchable riches of his grace, and the boundless and everlasting riches of glory. By these he is the recipient of pardon, adoption, holiness, and eternal life:

> "Slaves are made partners of his throne,
> Deckèd with a never-fading crown."

II. *The peculiar Features by which Christ's Friendship is distinguished.*

1. Entire disinterestedness.

It is not possible that Jesus, who is Lord of all things, could be profited by his dependent creature man. Oh no, he had his good, his real and eternal good only at heart. He sought not his, for what had he which Christ had not bestowed?

2. Amazing condescension.

It is wonderful condescension in our divine Lord to behold the things which are upon earth; but how much more marvellous, that he should visit man, become his kinsman, live with him, and die for him

3. Unshaken constancy.

Having undertaken to be the friend of men, he carried out his design to the utmost. With the cost and sacrifice before ity never failed, his good will

abated not, his dying prayer attested his unfailing and devoted regard for our well-being and salvation. And although eighteen centuries have rolled since his resurrection and ascension to his Father's right hand, his gracious attachment to the interests of sinners is as ardent and tender as ever. Still it is true of him,

> "His bowels melt with tenderness,
> His heart is full of love."

4. Unlimited ability.

As his heart is full of immutable love, so his power to help is equal to the infinity of his grace.

(1) He is never far from us A friend near to us at all times and in all places.

(2) His resources are inexhaustible. He possesses every good we can need, and he is disposed every moment to impart it to us.

(3) He can ward off all evils, silence the tongues of all adversaries, and deliver us from all our enemies. He is every day and hour the help and shield of his people. He gives grace, &c.

(4) Having immortality and life in himself, those interested in his regards will never be deprived of his mercy and love. He will be our guide unto life's termination, our solace in death, and our portion forever. Notice,

III. *The Duties which Christ's Friendship involves.*

His friendship,

1. Should be reciprocated.

He calls us to be his friend, and tells us how we may exhibit our friendship towards him. We cannot be Christ's friends if we are in league with his enemies,—with sin and Satan. He requires us to abandon these. Then we must also exhibit our love to him and our confidence in him, by receiving his words, embracing his truth, imbibing his spirit, following his steps, and keeping his commandments. "Ye are my friends if ye do," &c. His friendship,

2. Should be gratefully acknowledged.

Our mouths and hearts should extol it. We should celebrate it from day to day,—

> "Praise should employ our highest powers,
> While life or thought or being last,
> Or immortality endures."

3. It should be ardently cherished.

How careful we should be not to grieve, not to displease him. How solicitous to please him and honor him. How deeply we should value his friendship, and how ready to relinquish every thing incompatible with it. By constant intercourse, and frequent visits to his palace and throne, should the friendly spirit be cultivated, and its ardor excited. It should indeed be a growing friendship, deepening and enlarging through all time and through all eternity.

4. It should be universally recommended

> "Should we not tell to sinners round,
> What a dear Saviour we have found?"

Oh yes, everywhere should we speak of the preciousness of Christ. The love of Christ. The graciousness of Christ.

APPLICATION.

1. Are we Christ's friends? If not, how wicked and ungrateful. If we are such let humble gratitude celebrate it day by day.

2. Urge the sinner full of enmity now to be reconciled to him.

3. The doom of his adversaries will be fearfully terrible.

LV.—CHRIST THE DOOR.

"I am the door."—*John* x. 7

Jesus has a peculiar claim to the metaphorical title here expressed. In reference to every thing that relates to the happiness and dignity of man here, or to his advancement in felicity and glory to come, he is the door, the only way of access. Consider man as an alien or outcast, a wandering, dying rebel against his God, and then,

I. *Jesus is the only Door, or Way of Access, to the Divine Favor and Family.*

It is when we come to God, exercising faith in his Son, that we are accepted of him, are freely justified, and have the privilege of becoming his adopted sons. To his spiritual house Jesus is the only door. God will not, and, by reason of his eternal spotlessness, cannot treat with us but through the person of the Lord Jesus Christ.

II. *Jesus is also the Door to all the Privileges of his Church.*

By union to the head only can we derive that spiritual nourishment which the members of the mystical body require. By faith in Jesus, we have an evangelical right to all the privileges and immunities of his

people. Then all is ours,—the word, the gospel preached, the promises recorded, the precious ordinances, and the all-essential influences of the Spirit, are all ours. Then may we dwell in his banqueting-house, and sit down at his table with great delight.

III. *Jesus is also the Door to Communion with the Father.*

To God, there is but way of access, and that is by his Son Whether it be by prayer, or meditation, or praise, we only can approach Jehovah, and hold intercourse with him by coming through this door.

IV. *Jesus, too, is the only Door to eternal Glory.*

He is the way into the holiest place of all. By him we come to God graciously now, and by him we shall enter into the paradise above, for, as our forerunner, he hath passed before us, taken possession of heaven for his people, and waits to receive them unto himself, that where he is, there they may be also. Now in all these respects,

1. Jesus is a constantly open door.

He became the door from the instant the first promise was announced, and he has been the open door from that period to the present time. The way to God has not been closed for a single moment. During the thousands of years that have rolled onwards in their changing course, he has remained fixed in his mediatorial office, and has changed not. How blessed is the consideration that, whether by day or night, the seeking sinner can never find this door of hope closed against him.

2. Then he is also a door for all.

None have been excluded from God's compassionate regards, for he hath loved the world, and Jesus is the propitiation for the sins of the whole world, and the gospel freely invites all, without respect to country, age, or character, to come unto God by him. There never was, nor is, nor ever will be, any other exclusion than that of the sinner's impenitency and unbelief. We remark,

3. That Jesus is the only door.

There is but one mediator between God and us. There is but one name given, one Saviour found, one sacrifice offered, one gospel preached—that name and Saviour is Jesus—that sacrifice, the blood of his cross—and that gospel, the gospel of Christ. There is but one door for the profligate and the moral, the profane and the professor, the publican and the Pharisee. There is but one door for the rich and the poor, the learned and the illiterate, the aged and the young, the monarch and the slave. In short, there is but this door for the whole of our guilty world. He is the door, and whosoever refuseth or neglecteth him must be excluded from heaven, but whosoever entereth in by him shall obtain eternal life

APPLICATION.

1. If Christ be the only door, then how desirable is it that we see how we stand connected with him. Let us inquire, then as to our *knowledge* of Christ as the door. Have we right views of our necessity of such a door? Have we felt our distance from God, and have we perceived the glorious adaptation of Jesus in his person and work to bring us nigh to him? Have we beheld in Jesus the very object adapted to our spiritual need, in whom there is a fulness of grace to meet all our exigencies and supply all our wants? Jesus cannot be the door to us unless we know him, for this is life eternal, to know the true God and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent.

2. Let us also ascertain as to our *approach* to God by this door. Have we come to him and believed in him, availed ourselves of his merits, trusted in his mediation, and thus obtained forgiveness of sins and peace with God? If we have used Christ as the door, then are we no longer without, no longer at a distance, no longer condemned; but now are we reconciled to God, and by the testimony of the Holy Spirit to our spirits, we know that we are the sons of God.

3. Then, let us ascertain also as to our estimate of this door. Do we value it above all things? for to them that believe Christ is precious, precious always, yea, superlatively precious. If we value this door, we shall extol it by lips of sanctified praise, and by lives of ardent love and holy obedience to Christ.

4. How necessary it is that we constantly avail ourselves of this door We cannot hold intercourse with God for a moment but through Christ, and God cannot behold us with complacency except when he beholds us in the face of his anointed One. Then Christ is emphatically our life and salvation, and the life that we live must be a life of faith in the

Son of God, who loved us and gave himself for us.

LVI.—CHRIST THE LIVING AND PRECIOUS STONE.

"To whom coming, as *unto* a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious." 1 *Pet.* ii. 4.

This passage evidently refers to Christ. And is quite similar language to that employed by the psalmist more than a thousand years before, when he sang of Messiah in Ps. cxviii. 22. The verses following the text refer to a passage in the prophecy of Isaiah, xxviii. 16. Let us notice,

I. *The Description given of Christ.*

A living stone, &c.

II. *Men's Rejection of this Stone.*

Disallowed of men.

III. *God's Respect to this Stone*

Chosen of God and precious.

IV. *The Sinner's Duty and Interest* :—

Viz. coming to this stone.

I. *The Description given of Christ.*

A living stone, &c. Often represented as a stone.

1. A stone.

(1) As expressive of the strength and power of Christ. Created things are like the sand,—fleeting,—gliding,—uncertain. Christ possesses all power. "All power is given," &c. He gave repeated displays of it on earth. He exerted it on obstinate diseases,—on the furious storm,—on the dead,—and also on devils, &c. "He is able to save to the uttermost," &c.

(2) Expressive of his *firmness* and *durability*. Stone is not like corruptible things, as hay, straw, or stubble. He is a rock—the rock of ages. Nothing can affect him; no change or commotion. Time has worn down the marble column, and undermined the foundations of Babylon and Nineveh, &c.

2. Living stone

(1) He has life in himself. He is the source of life. All life emanates from him. He is the true and living God. The being in whom we live, &c. All nature lives in him, &c. Especially spiritual life. Only source of spiritual life. "I am the way," &c.

(2) It denotes the feeling of Christ. He is not insensible. He is not unconscious, &c. No. He feels for *us*—knows our wretchedness,—sees our misery—can hear our groans, &c. He is alive to all the circumstances connected with our state Notice,

II *Men's Rejection of this Stone.*

"Disallowed of men." This refers to the Jews. They would not receive him. Denied his *Messiahship*, and despised his miracles. Rejected his doctrines, and put him to death, Matt. xxi. 42; Acts iv 11.

Why did they reject him? For want of evidence? No. Never man did what he did. He appeared the very person, &c. described in their scriptures, &c. It was pride, producing unbelief, and then malice, &c. He did not appear as they desired. *He* did not *preach* as they *desired*. *He* did not *promise* as they *desired*. Therefore they would not allow him or approve of him, &c. *But* Christ is still *disallowed* of men,—still of the Jews, Mahomedans, infidels,—still by all *unbelievers*,—lovers of the world. They do not admire his *doctrines*,—are offended at the *sacrifice* he requires, &c.

III. *God's respect to this Stone.*

Chosen of God, &c. Two things.

1. Chosen of God.

(1) Originally selected. Originally selected for the great enterprise. God fixed upon his Son—called him forth, as the only fit personage for the stupendous undertaking.

(2) God was pleased with him. He answered his expectations. He told the multitude this at Jordan; the disciples this, at the mount of transfiguration, &c.

(3) When he had finished his work, he was accepted of God; he raised him from the dead, &c.

2. Precious.

This also refers to God. He was always precious in his Father's eyes. His eternal delight, &c. But expressly as Mediator.

(1) His name was precious. God exalted it above every name, &c.

(2) His doctrines. "Hear ye him."

(3) His sacrifices. It met all the infinite claims of justice and purity.

(4) His person. Hence he says, "Let all the angels of God worship him," and "Sit thou on my right hand," &c. Observe,

IV. *The Sinner's Duty and Interest.*

To whom coming. This implies

1. Scriptural knowledge of Christ.

We must know him, as scripturally revealed. Have we proper views of his person and of his work, &c.

2. A feeling sense of our need of Christ.

That we are at a distance, and that as such we are unhappy, unsafe; that we have destroyed ourselves and in Christ alone is our help.

3. A sincere and hearty approval of Christ.

Receiving his doctrines as the word of life. His blood as the meritorious cause of salvation. Leaving every other source, and trusting all with Christ. "To whom should we go but unto thee," &c.

4. A perpetual resting on and cleaving to Christ.

He is laid as the foundation. We must not only come and see and admire him,—but build on him, cleave to him, and abide on him. "This God is my God," &c. This is the sinner's duty and interest. Christ is the only stone. This the only way to enjoy his benefits.

APPLICATION.

1. To disallowers. Rejectors of Christ. How foolish. How infatuated. How ruinous, &c. It is to reject pardon, happiness, salvation.

2. To believers. O value this stone. Rest constantly upon it. All here is secure. Secure in time, in death, and forever.

3. To inquirers. Those who are coming to it, we say, be decided, exercise faith in it. Cast all upon it, and live forever.

LVII.—METAPHORICAL REPRESENTATIONS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

"The supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ."—*Phil.* i. 19

If we are to know any thing clearly of Deity, it must be from his word. Especially from the statements and declaration of the only-begotten of the Father, who came to manifest the glory of the Godhead, and to bring life and immortality to light by the gospel. By referring to this we discover the unity of the Godhead, and the spirituality of his nature But we also have presented to us the personal distinction of Father, Son, and Spirit. The same terms are applied to each, and each is clothed in the glorious attributes of the Godhead. Doubtless this is one of the profound mysteries of our religion. What shall we do,—shall we reject the truths stated, on the ground of mystery? If so we might reject many of the palpable facts connected with nature. Is it not rather then our wisdom to receive the truths of revelation, and to use the phraseology of the scriptures, and not to attempt to explain, and define what God has not defined in his word. Let us at this time attend to the great and interesting theme presented in the text. "The supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ." We shall,

I. *Offer some Remarks on the Holy Spirit.*

We notice,

1. The Spirit bears the essential titles of Deity.

He is frequently styled the Spirit of God. "Know ye not that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you." "Grieve not the Spirit of God." By comparing Ex. xxxiv. 34, 2 Cor. iii. 15–17. And also Ex. xvii. 7; Heb. iii. 7–9. See also Acts v. 1–4.

2. The Spirit is represented as possessing the attributes of Deity.

(1) Eternity. "How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your consciences from dead works to serve the living God," Heb. ix. 14.

(2) Infinity and omnipresence, Psalm cxxxix. 7, 8.

(3) All knowledge and omniscience. "But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit, for the Spirit searcheth all things; yea, the deep things of God. For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man, which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God," 1 Cor. ii. 10, 11.

(4) Holiness. "The Spirit of holiness," Rom. i. 4. "Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God," &c.

3. The Spirit is connected with the glorious works of God.

(1) In creation. It is said, "the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters." It is also said, "God by his Spiri garnished the heavens." See Job xxxiii. 4

(2) The renovation of the soul, the new creation of man, is the work of the Spirit

"Born of the Spirit." "It is the Spirit that quickeneth." That gives liberty. That transforms into the divine likeness. That seals, sanctifies, keeps, &c.

(3) The resurrection of the body is to be effected by his power. This is most beautifully and forcibly illustrated in Ezekiel's vision of dry bones. "Then said he unto me, Prophesy unto the wind, prophesy, son of man, and say to the wind, Thus saith the Lord God, Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live," Ezek. xxxvii. 9. See Rom. viii. 11. "But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead, dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you." Observe,

4. Some of the emblems by which the Spirit is presented to our minds in the holy scriptures.

Of these we select the following.

(1) He is likened to wind or air. This was the figure used by the Redeemer with Nicodemus. "The wind bloweth where it listeth," &c., John iii. 8. So also when it descended on the disciples at the day of Pentecost, there was heard as it were, "a sound from heaven as of a mighty," &c., Acts ii. 1, 2. Now this emblem teaches us the invisibility of the Spirit. Its universal pervading presence encircling all things. Its mighty power.

(2) He is likened to water. "In the last great day of the feast, Jesus stood up and cried," &c. Hence, in prophecy we read of it being poured out,—of floods,—of streams,—of the wells of salvation. Now this emblem denotes the freeness, the abundance, or plenteousness of the Spirit. It teaches us also its vegetating and refreshing influence. Its cleansing and purifying power.

(3) He is likened to fire. So John spake of the baptism of the Holy Ghost. "I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance," &c., Matt. ii. See Acts ii. 3, 4. "And there appeared unto them cloven tongues, like as of fire," &c. Thus "we are not to quench the Holy Spirit," &c. Now this emblem denoteth the penetrating nature of the Spirit. Its illuminating power. Its refining influence.

(4) He is compared to oil. Hence all the passages which speak of its anointing, imply this figure. This includes its softening, healing, comforting, and beautifying influences. Hence we read in that striking prophecy of Christ, "Wherefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows," Psalm xlv. 7

II. *The characteristic Appellation by which the Spirit is presented to us in the Text.*

"Spirit of Jesus Christ."

1. The Spirit which was essentially connected with his person and work

(1) His conception was by the Spirit.

(2) He was anointed with it at his baptism. The visible emblem of the dove descending, &c. It rested in all its fulness, and was not given by measure unto him.

(3) He did all his works by it. In its fulness he went forth to preach, to suffer, to work miracles, &c. See Heb. ix. 14. "Who through the eternal Spirit offered himself," &c.

(4) It raised him from the dead, Rom viii. 11.

3. The Spirit which he obtained for his church.

"And when he is come, he will reprove," &c., John xvi. 8. "But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send," &c., John xiv. 26.

3. The Spirit which Christ confers on all believers.

All things are in Christ's hands. "He hath ascended on high," &c. Hence the Spirit, in all his saving influences, he sheds down upon his believing people. Faith in Christ only can realize his blessed operations.

APPLICATION.

1. How desirable to have clear views of the Spirit of God.

2. How necessary to fear and reverence before him.

3. How anxious we should be to be filled with his influences.

4. How may we obtain them? "If ye being evil," &c.

LVIII.—THE CHURCH OF CHRIST A FLOCK.

"The flock of God."—1 *Pet.* v. 2.

THE text is found in the midst of an exhortation given by the apostle Peter to the bishops and elders who had been appointed

to the oversight of the churches of Christ. As such the apostle urges upon them to "feed the flock of God," and to take the pastoral care without constraint, "willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind." The figure employed by the apostle, in reference to Christian pastors, is that of a shepherd, and in the fourth verse he announces the delightful promise, that when the chief, or great shepherd shall appear, they shall receive the crown of glory that fadeth not away. Let us then consider the church under the metaphorical representation of a flock. The primary idea is that of believers as sheep. Christ thus speaks of them as his sheep, and of himself as their good shepherd. In their collective capacity they are a flock.

I. *Notice the Flock itself.*

It is composed of all renewed, converted persons. It supposes they have been brought from their wanderings on the mountains of sin, to the pastoral care of Jesus, the shepherd and bishop of souls, 1 Pet. ii. 25; Isa. liii. Believers only are the sheep of Christ. Those who have been brought nigh to him by saving grace and the power of his truth. Docility, meekness, and usefulness, are the invariable characteristics of those who belong to the flock of Christ. Among these are young converts, mature believers, and saints, who have borne fruit even to old age.

II. *The Flock of God have one chief Shepherd.*

Redeemed by his precious blood they are the especial property of Christ. He laid down his life for them. They are given to him as his seed, and reward. They form the joy of his heart. He loves them with inexpressible tenderness and affection. He watches over them with constant solicitude. He never leaves nor forsakes them. He provides them with under-shepherds, men whom he qualifies and appoints to feed them with spiritual knowledge and understanding. But these are all subordinate to Jesus who is the great shepherd of the sheep, and head over all things to his church.

III. *The Flock of God have rich and verdant Pastures*

Thus the psalmist sang, "He leadeth me into green pastures," &c. There are the pastures of his holy word. And the pastures of his refreshing ordinances. In these they are amply provided with necessary provision. Here they enjoy the adapted, rich, and overflowing blessings of heavenly grace. Here they have food and enjoyments of which the world know nothing. And these pastures are ever fresh and green. Made verdant by the copious showers of holy influences, and through which ever flow the waters of the river of life. To these all the flock have constant access. Here they lie down and rest in safety.

IV. *The Flock of God have one Fold in Heaven.*

Here they are one in nature, all renewed and partakers of the divine nature. One in spirit,—one in union with Jesus,—one in the privileges and blessings of salvation. But they are scattered over the face of the earth. Dwelling remotely from each other. Have lived too in various ages of the world. Been partially separated by language, denominational distinctions, &c., &c. But there is one great and blessed fold for the flock of God. One celestial Eden, one heavenly paradise. It will be their unspeakable privilege to be with their divine shepherd, and dwell in perfect unity and delight on the glorious plains of light forever and ever.

APPLICATION.

1. A variety of duties devolve upon the flock of God. Submission to the authority of the great Shepherd. Cultivation of docility, meekness, and love. Affectionate attachment to every one belonging to Christ's spiritual flock. Supreme regard for the honor of Jesus, and the prosperity of his cause in the earth.

2. A variety of blessings their present portion. An interest in the rich covenant of divine love. A gracious right to the riches of heavenly grace. Exceedingly great and precious promises. The holy comforting influences of the Spirit of God The sweet joys of Christian fellowship Invulnerable protection and security from all their enemies, and every possible peril

3. Urge wandering sinners to listen, and obey the voice of the compassionate Jesus and live.

4. How wretched and miserable are those who have forsaken Christ. O return that he may heal your backslidings, &c

LIX.—THE CHURCH A HABITATION FOR GOD.

"An habitation of God through the Spirit."—*Eph.* ii 22.

God in a variety of forms expresses his complacent regards and delights in his church. He loves the church with the devotedness which a mother feels to her only son. He values it as his peculiar treasure, and as such he exercises his care constantly for its preservation. He maketh his church his especial dwelling, and fixes his gracious residence within it. He has chosen it for his hallowed rest, and there he has said, his eyes and his heart shall be continually. As such the apostle represents the church of Christ in our text. It is a building fitly framed and united together. For "an habitation of God through the Spirit."

I. *As a Building it has a strong and immoveable Foundation.*

That foundation is the Lord Jesus Christ. A foundation "elect," "precious." A foundation stronger than the pillars of heaven, against which the gates of hell can never prevail. On Jesus all the interests of the church rest. He sustains the whole weight of the massive structure, and upholdeth all by the word of his power. From this foundation we may conclude as to the strength, immoveableness, and perpetuity of the building itself, 1 Cor. iii. 11, &c.

II. *As a Building it is formed of various and many Materials.*

These materials were originally unfit, and in their natural state adapted only to the purposes of the wicked one. Divine truth and grace brought them out of the quarry of nature; gave them their suitable shape and character; chiselled them, and gave them polish and fitness for this spiritual erection. And this applies to all the materials. For in the true and spiritual church of Christ, there are none but real converts, those who have become spiritual persons. Of these there is great diversity of character, and condition, and extent of intellectual and moral worth. The number of these is only known to God, as they are scattered in all Christian congregations over the face of the whole earth, and have been added to this holy structure in every age of the history of our world.

III. *This Building includes the Union of these Materials with each other.*

"Fitly framed together" "Builded together." Hence the term church signifies congregated persons. Persons united and associated with each other. Grace unites men to God, and also the good and excellent together. Those who believed on the day of pentecost "were together." In this way the *safety* of all is contemplated. Separated, they would indeed be feeble; united, they are as a wall of adamant. In this way the *comfort* of all is promoted. The social feelings are sanctified and cherished, and they feel that many are better and happier than one alone. In this way the *usefulness* of all is increased. In serving Christ we are also to serve one another. The foot and the hand both serve the body, and also each other. In this way the *welfare* and *prosperity* of all are advanced. Christian virtues are exercised, Christian graces cherished, Christian feelings excited, and Christian prosperity thus very materially extended. The church, as a building, unites the holy to God and to one another.

IV. *As a Building it is devoted to the most hallowed and glorious Purpose.*

"A habitation for God." What a sublime thought! God dwells in the highest heaven. The heaven of heavens cannot contain him. His presence fills the universe. He is everywhere by the immensity of his omnipresent Spirit. Yet he dwells in the midst of his church, as its glory and blessedness.

> "He makes the churches his abode,
> His most delightful seat."

Here he sanctifies unto himself a palace. Here he has a glorious high throne of holiness. Here he holds audience, and scatters amply around the blessings of his grace. Here makes the place of his feet glorious. Here has the attendance of his holy angels, those ministers of his who do his pleasure. Here he manifests himself as he doth not unto the world.

V. *This Building is erected and prepared as an Habitation for God through the Spirit.*

The Holy Spirit of God is the efficient agent in all the gracious change effected in the souls of believers, and by which they are sanctified to the hallowed service of God. The Spirit of God illumines the soul and fits it to be a palace of holy light. The Spirit purifies the soul and fits it for the enthronement of the immaculate Deity The Holy Spirit furnishes the soul with

all those graces and qualities, by which it ecures the approbation and complacent smiles of the divine countenance. Through the Spirit the means of the church of Christ are blest to the real growth and welfare of its members. The Spirit counteracts and overthrows the Satanic powers, which would overwhelm the believer, or, if possible, raze the kingdom of Christ. "When the enemy comes in like a flood," &c.

All that purity with which the church is beautified, and is rendered meet for the residence of Jehovah, is through the Spirit. Of the church as the habitation for God we notice,

1. It is the habitation of his choice.

He fixed his delights upon it, and chose it as his residence on earth. He passes by the palaces of the great and the mansions of the noble, and dwells with his afflicted and persecuted saints.

2. It is the habitation of his love.

How much he loves what seraph can tell? Let the amazing gift of his Son, and the scenes of Gethsemane and Calvary, declare it. Let the history of providence attest his unchanging regards towards it.

3. It is the habitation of his care.

He ever watches over it. He keeps it continually. His everlasting arms encompass it. His angels minister to it. All his perfections are pledged for its security.

4. It is distinguished for its antiquity.

It has been God's habitation for nearly six thousand years.

5. For its vast extent.

It is now so enlarged as to embrace many lands, and shall ultimately reach from the rivers to the ends of the earth—be the glory and joy of the whole world.

APPLICATION.

1. Do we form a part of this holy structure?

2. Does the God of love dwell within us, and reign over us?

3. What sacredness, what purity, what dignity, is associated with this representation of the church.

4. With what wisdom, veneration, and lowliness of mind, should every member of the church be clothed.

LX.—THE CHURCH THE GARDEN OF THE LORD

"As a watered garden."—*Jer.* xxxi. 12.

THE world is a dreary, sterile wilderness. Here nothing spiritual and holy thrives or flourishes. Under the curse, it yields briers, and thorns, and noxious weeds. Sin blighted the moral creation of God, and turned the Eden of the Lord into a barren desert. Through the intervention of divine mercy, God has set on foot a scheme of merciful renovation. He has sent down the riches of his grace, that earth might again become the paradise of holiness and bliss. His kingdom set up in the world, is the separation to himself of the called and regenerated children of men. United in the fellowship of the gospel, they constitute his spiritual church, and appear in our wilderness world as the "watered garden" of the Lord.

I. *As a Garden the Church is separated from the World.*

Originally like the waste, howling wilderness; now distinct and separated, called out of the world as to spirit and character The church is in the world, but not of it Not like it. Separated by a prominent line of demarcation. This separation is to be manifest, as unlike the world as the garden is unlike the barren heath.

II. *As a Garden the Church is surrounded by a protective Fence.*

Otherwise it would be a prey to wild beasts. It would be a thoroughfare for every rude foot. It would become a waste, a desolation. The church of Christ is fenced round, as with a wall of adamant. God is its keeper and defence. He is round about in the energy of his omnific power, and by the omnipresence of his irresistible Spirit. "As the mountains are round about Jerusalem," &c., Psalm cxxv. 2.

III. *As a Garden the Church is in a state of Cultivation and Improvement.*

The association of believers as the church of Christ, is for their edification and advancement in knowledge and holiness. Besides the church itself under every dispensation is in a state of progress until it shall reach millennial glory and perfection For the church's cultivation he sends his word, his messengers, and the benign influences of his benevolent providential administrations.

IV. *As a Garden it is distinguished by its Trees and Plants.*

The good man is likened to a lofty cedar, the useful olive, the fruitful vine, the fragrant myrtle, the thriving willow, the refreshing pomegranate, &c. Believers may be compared to beautiful flowers. Adorned with the graces of the Spirit, they are indeed flowers of loveliness pleasing and acceptable to God, and ornamental to the world in which they live. These plants are said to be the Lord's planting, Matt. xv. 13. To be planted in the house of the Lord, &c. Psalm xcii. 12–14.

V. *As a Garden it is richly watered by the Blessings of Heaven.*

Water is indispensable to fertility and growth. Without, nature is scorched up, and vegetation languisheth. The Spirit of God is often presented to us under this figure. Isaiah prophesied that in the wilderness "waters should break out," &c., ch. xxxv. 6, 7. So Jesus in the last great day of the feast "stood up and cried," &c., John vii. 37. See also Isaiah xliv. 3, lv. 1; and in reference to his vineyard the Lord says, "I will water it every moment," &c., Isa. xxvii. 3. These holy and spiritual communications are essential to our comfort, well-being, fruitfulness, &c. They keep the garden of the Lord ever verdant, and produce from the trees of the Lord an abundant increase.

VI. *As a Garden the Lord expects a Return of Fruit from it.*

All the labor and outlay of God's goodness is to produce to the glory of his name the fruits of holiness. He expects holy graces to be manifested. Holy virtues to be exercised. A holy Spirit to be displayed. Holy conversation to be exemplified. That spiritual fruitfulness which will render fit for transplanting to the pure and blissful regions of the Eden above. And how reasonable is this expectation. And how important to us. Let us inquire if we render to the Lord the fruits of righteousness, and show forth his praises who hath called us out of darkness, &c.

APPLICATION

1. Do we form a part of the Lord's garden?

2. Are we the plants of his right-hand planting?

3 Are we flourishing? Retaining our verdure, growing as the fir-tree or the cedar. Yielding fruit to God.

4. The impenitent wicked, as briers and thorns, he will consume in the day of his fiery indignation.

LXI.—CHRISTIAN CHURCHES LIKENED TO GOLDEN CANDLESTICKS

"I saw seven golden candlesticks."—*Rev.* i. 12.

Our text relates to the visions of Patmos. Here the servant of God was showed wonderful things in reference to the kingdom and reign of Jesus. He was allowed to see through the vista of succeeding generations, until he beheld the termination of time, the conflagration of the earth, the erection of the judgment, and the everlasting destiny of the universal family of man. Thus was the banishment of God's servant to a dreary island overruled for the glory of God, and for affording those revelations by which the canon of the scriptures should be completed. It appears that the things which were first presented to the mind of John, were the seven Asiatic churches, unto whom the mind of the Spirit and the word of God were to be first sent. The representation under which these churches were brought before him was that of a golden candlestick, having seven branches, in the midst of which appeared the "Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot," &c. This representation equally applies to all the churches of the Saviour throughout the world. The seven candlesticks would doubtless be better rendered lamps; but the spirit and signification of the metaphor is in both cases the same. Observe, then,

I. *The Metaphor employed*

"A candlestick."

II. *The Material of which it is composed.*

"A golden," &c.

III. *The Source of its Light and Splendor.*

"In the midst," &c.

I. *The Metaphor employed.*

"A candlestick." That is, an instrument of light. That by which light is lifted up and made manifest. "Ye are the light of the world." "A city set upon a hill," &c. Every Christian church is elevated above the world to give light to it

To shine forth," &c. "Holding forth the word of life," &c. Now the church of Christ is to diffuse abroad,

1. The light of knowledge.

They know the truth, and have it richly deposited with them. Pillar and ground of truth. Gospel of light is with them, &c. And herein they know God, and his holy and blessed will, and Jesus Christ the blessed mediator whom he hath sent, and this light of the knowledge of the glory of God they are to diffuse abroad, even to the ends of the earth.

2. The light of holiness.

That which is the opposite of the darkness of depravity and sin. The light of the divine image. "The glory of the Lord hath risen," &c. The light of the new moral creation, &c.

3. The light of benevolence.

Darkness is the fit emblem of the vicious and malevolent. Light the emblem of goodness. God is love. And this love is the distinguishing feature of renewed minds, and of his sanctified church. This good will is to be prominent and distinctly evidenced towards all men, but especially to the household of faith.

Thus the church is to shine forth in truth, in beauty, and goodness. And this they are to do in their individual character, each one as the servant of God. And in their collective character all united in effort to show forth his praises and to advance the divine glory in the world. The church is to do this,

(1) By maintaining the ordinances of the gospel in their purity.—Word, baptism, Lord's supper, &c.

(2) By enforcing spiritual discipline and order.

(3) By vigorous exertions to extend the kingdom of Jesus. Observe,

II. *The Material of which it is composed.*

"Gold." A golden candlestick. Indicating,

1. The purity of the church.

Formed of the most holy and excellent materials.

2. The splendor of the church.

Arrayed in moral beauty, in spiritual splendor. "All glorious within." "Beauty of the Lord upon them," &c. "Changed into the same glory," &c.

3. The preciousness of the church.

Intrinsically valuable. The purchase of precious blood, &c Compared to Jehovah's diadem. His jewels. His treasures His delight.

4. The perpetuity of the church.

Durable. Not corruptible or evanescent Firm, abiding, in all countries, ages, &c. Unconsumed in fire, purified in flames and preserved always. Notice,

III. *The Source of its Light and Splendor.*

The Son of man in the midst. What a sublime and glorious description is presented of him. His eternity—"Hairs white." &c. His purity—sacerdotal "garment," &c. His knowledge—"His eyes like a flame," &c. His strength and power—"Feet as brass," &c. His sublime majesty—"His voice as the sound of many waters," &c. His station is in the midst of his churches. Accessible to all. Near to all. The glory of all.

1. He is the source of the church's knowledge.

The truth. The light. The depository of all wisdom.

2. Of her purity.

His blood, righteousness, Spirit.

3. Of her benevolence.

His love imparted produces it. It is his love, operative, constraining, &c.

4. Of her perpetuity.

Because he is in the midst she is not destroyed. He lives, and *therefore* his church lives also. He is the Alpha and Omega of the church, its glory, and all in all.

APPLICATION

1. How differently God and the world estimate the church. To one the object of scorn and contempt, to the other glorious and exalted.

2. The true design of Christ. To give light. To shine. To show forth the glory of God.

3. What will be its splendor and magnificence in heaven.

4. If the omniscient Jesus is in the midst, how holy and spiritually minded should his members be.

LXII.—CHRIST'S CHURCH A FAMILY

"The whole family in heaven and earth."—*Eph* iii. 15.

It is the very nature of sin to divide and to destroy. Sin sowed the seeds of anarchy and rebellion in heaven, and thus sep

arated the sinning angels from those who retained their original holiness and glory. Sin separated the first of our race from God, and expelled the transgressors from the peaceful abode of the earthly paradise. Sin separated the hearts of the first brethren, and having filled the breast of Cain with hate and envy, caused him to slay his brother. From that period to the present, sin has been separating men from God, and from each other. Religion is designed to counteract this evil, malevolent work of sin. It brings together, reconciles, unites in bonds of amity and love. It reconciles earth and heaven, man and God, and man with man. It has one anthem which it sings, "Glory to God in the highest, and peace on earth," &c. Our subject leads us to contemplate one scene wherein this is exhibited, and that is in the church below, which is likened in the text to one family. "The whole family in earth." Let us consider,

I. *Who constitute the Divine Family on Earth.*

Now it appears that there is one text that clearly settles this point,—John i. 12.

1. Faith then is the first evidence.

"For we are all the children of God by faith," Gal. iii. 26.

2. Regeneration is the second evidence.

"To as many as received him he gave power," &c. "Blessed be the God and Father,' &c. "Except a man be born again," &c. "If any man be in Christ," &c.

3. Obedience is a third evidence.

"For as many as are led by the Spirit of God," &c. "For whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother."

4. Love is the fourth evidence.

"We know that we have passed," &c. "Every one that loveth is born of God," &c., 1 John iii. 16.

These are essential evidences, nothing can make up for the want of these, and they will always go together. We shall see then that this family may include,

(1) Persons of all countries.

(2) Of different parties and sects.

(3) Of various creeds.

(4) Of all classes, rich and poor, learned and illiterate. Diversity of opinions seem the necessary result of the present state of things. Such as, (i.) Different grades of mental powers. (ii.) Different amount of knowledge. (iii.) Different mode of education. (iv.) Different media of receiving our ideas and religious impressions.

II. *That which forms the Bond of Unity so as to constitute Believers one Family.*

1. They have one common Father, v. 14.

In prayer they all address the same Being, and by the same appellation, "Father"—"Our," not mine merely.

2. They have one common nature.

This does not render absolute likeness necessary any more than the resemblance of all of the same species. New nature The spiritual principle—that which is from heaven—heavenly.

3. They have one common Saviour.

Jesus Christ. "No other name given," &c. His merits only avail. He is the sacrifice. The one intercessor. One mediator, &c., 1 Tim. ii. 3–6, and iv. 10.

4. They have one common spirit.

There is only one spirit to dwell in them to guide—cheer—comfort—sanctify, &c.

5. They have one common revelation.

The scriptures are the gift of Christ to his church. As such they are common property. Belong to all, both ministers and people. They have each and all a right to read, and study, and judge for themselves. All the same right of appeal "To the law," &c.

6. They have one common treasury.

The inexhaustible mine of the precious promises; every promise is the common portion of every child of God.

7. They have one common home.

All sailing to the same haven. All bound for the same Canaan. Hence Christ said, "They shall come from the east," &c., Rev vii. 9.

But this would encroach on the other part of the text.

APPLICATION.

1. In contemplating the whole family of God upon earth we are called to mourn over its imperfections, and its divisions, yet it is clear it will only be in the millennial state of things when these will be removed.

2. We learn the great necessity of Christian forbearance and love. This does not imply indifference to any truth, or that we shut our eyes against error. But let us always distinguish between the person, and the error. And let us rejoice with

men for the truth they hold, and always be found speaking the truth in love

3. Mutual kindness and sympathy should distinguish the same family, "Love as brethren," &c. "Bear ye one another's burdens," &c.

4. Let it lead us to personal examination. Are we members of this family, &c.

LXIII.—BELIEVERS SERVANTS OF GOD.

"Become servants to God."—*Rom.* vi. 22.

THE apostle is contrasting the believer's past with his present condition. Once, he reminds the converted Romans, they were strangers to righteousness and the servants of sin. A state of debasement, and of the fruit of which they were now sincerely ashamed. A state too, which would have terminated in death: "For the end of those things is death." But by the saving grace of God they had been emancipated from sin and its degrading vassalage, and were now "become the servants of God." What kind of service is that which the Christian yields to God?

I. *It is voluntary Service.*

In the day when sin is abandoned and the gospel of salvation is cordially embraced, the soul, and heart, and mind, are yielded to God. As a living sacrifice they lay themselves on God's holy altar. They cheerfully devote themselves to the service and glory of God. God has displayed his willingness to engage us in his service by removing every impediment out of the way; by redeeming us from the curse of the law and the dominion of the devil; by sending us his gracious and tender invitations full of mercy and compassion; by tendering to us the richest promises in entering on his holy service. To these by cordial faith the believer assents, and freely engages to serve the Lord Christ. As it begins voluntarily, so also is it thus continued. Nothing else would please God. Nothing else would indicate a state of grace, or evidence the love of God shed abroad in the soul

II *It is comprehensive Service.*

As comprehensive as the revealed will of God. A service which includes the supreme love and veneration of God; the constant exercise of the devotional services of the heart; an unwavering regard to the glory of God in all things; personal advancement in knowledge and true holiness; a scriptural regard to the relative duties of life; a fervent employment of all our powers, talents, and means for the prosperity of Zion, and the diffusion of the gospel of Christ. In one word, seeking the honor and approbation of God in all things —"Living to the Lord"—embodying his commandments in our hearts and lives, and laboring to do "whatsoever he has commanded."

III. *It is arduous Service.*

Requiring the giving up to it the whole soul. Cannot be performed acceptably in a listless, supine state of mind. A service which calls for incessant zeal, for continuous fervor. A service involving life, energy, and resolution. It is arduous because of the internal dislike which the natural man has to it,—because of the temptations by which it is assailed,—because of the crosses and trials often connected with it. And,

IV. *It is highly responsible Service.*

For which an account will be demanded, and which must be given. He says, "Occupy" this sphere "until I come." He giveth talents and opportunities, &c., and will return and reckon with his servants This responsibility is personal,—solemn, and connected with consequences most momentous and everlasting. Glory, honor, bliss, and immortality, to those who do well. Shame, misery, and ruin, to those who are unfaithful and do evil. Yet,

V. *It is delightful Service.*

"Her ways are ways of pleasantness." There is nothing grievous to the rightly regulated mind in all the commandments or ordinances of the Lord.

On the other hand, the service of the Lord is connected,

1. With intellectual dignity.

It includes a sound mind. It is the glory of reason to be employed for God. It elevates all the powers of the soul. Expands the feelings of the heart, and capacitates the imagination for the loftiest and most sublime contemplations. To serve God is the glory of angels, the highest dignity of cherubim and seraphim. It gives to the soul both intellectual and moral elevation

2. With real enjoyment.

The enjoyment of a pacific conscience towards God. The enjoyment of inward heavenly peace. The enjoyment of God's gracious smile. The enjoyment of the

Holy Spirit, as the earnest or pledge of the future inheritance. The possession of a good hope, and joy unspeakable and full of glory.

3. With great profit.

Service of God is profitable to all things. To body and mind. To ourselves and others. To the life that now is, and that which is to come. The profit is real,—great,—invaluable,—and everlasting.

VI. *It is a Service which will be gloriously recompensed.*

Beyond mere right. Not according to our imperfect part, and almost valueless services, but according to the exceeding riches of the goodness and grace of God. There will be dominion, triumph, joy, a crown, a throne, and a kingdom. Honor, riches, and glory. Exalted dignity and eternal life. What a reward! How vast and inconceivably glorious. How infinitely transcending all our desires and thoughts. Worthy of boundless love and immeasurable grace

APPLICATION.

1. On the servants of God we urge great lowliness of mind. Watchfulness. Diligence and perseverance. "Be faithful unto death."

2. To the servants of God we present the promises of sufficient grace here, and eternal life in the world to come.

3. We invite the servants of sin to forsake the work of evil and death, and to take Christ's yoke, &c.

4. The day of reckoning for all is at hand.

LXIV.—SAINTS PILGRIMS ON THE EARTH.

"And pilgrims on the earth."—*Heb.* xi. 13.

The text relates to believers of Old Testament times, to whose history the apostle had been referring in the previous verses. He had spoken of Abel the first martyr. Of Enoch who was translated and did not see death. Of Noah who built the ark for the saving of his house. Of Abraham who went out, not knowing whither he went. Of Isaac and Jacob, heirs with him of the same promise. He then gives the delightful summary, "These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth." But equally true is it of all the people of God in every age of the world. This state is the house of the godly man's pilgrimage. To us then do the words equally refer. Let us ascertain,

I. *What is included in the Metaphor*

And,

II. *The Qualifications and Duties which are involved in it.*

I. *What is included in the Metaphor.*

A pilgrim is one without a fixed habitation, and who is journeying through a strange and foreign land. See verses 14, 15.

1. The pilgrim's original home was in the city of destruction.

In this he was born and educated. Here he lived and dwelt. Here he followed the carnal employments of the citizens. In this state he was far from God. Far from peace. Far from safety. He was an alien without God, without Christ, without hope. A child of wrath even as others.

2. His pilgrimage commenced through the influence of the gospel on his heart.

The truth came unto him. His misery and peril were depicted. His condition of ruin was declared. Escape and instant flight were urged upon him. A better land was revealed. Gospel salvation, including present rest and future glory, were published. Receiving the truth of the gospel, he abandoned the city of guilt and death, and fled for refuge to the hope set before him.

3. By faith in God's testimony he set his face towards the heavenly Zion.

He believed God, and therefore set his heart to seek

"A city out of sight,
A city in the skies."

A city whose builder and founder is God. The city of the new and heavenly Jerusalem. The inheritance of light.

4. As a pilgrim he claims no possession in the country through which he passes.

His good is not here. His affections are placed on high. He lays not up treasures on the earth. He considers all around him as mutable, and therefore he buys as though he bought not, rejoices as though he rejoiced not &c. He considers the world

as the desert in the way to Canaan,—the sea over which he crosses to the shores of glory. His treasure is in heaven, and his heart is there also.

5. As a pilgrim he travels onward towards the city of habitation.

He goes from stage to stage From experience to experience. From faith to faith. From dawn to day. From infancy to mature years, and on to old age. He advances in knowledge, love, obedience, and holiness, and thus increases in heavenly mindedness, and fitness for the society and services of the celestial Jerusalem. Genuine religion is progressive—deepening, expanding, and persevering to the end. Consider,

II. *The Qualifications and Duties involved in it.*

1. A pilgrim's heart.

And that is a renewed heart. One delivered from the love of sin and the world. A new heart. Heavenly nature. One under spiritual attractions, and moved by spiritual influences. Of all qualifications this is first and chief. A man must be born from above, before he will live for it, and seek it.

2. A pilgrim's head.

A knowledge of his way. Of the good old way. The way revealed in the holy scriptures. A way written in the luminous words of God. A way trodden by all preceding pilgrims journeying to Zion. Without a clear and full knowledge of this, all would be dubious and perplexed.

3. A pilgrim's spirit.

The spirit which has animated every child of God.

(1) Of devotion and direct intercourse with God.

(2) Of praise: singing his statutes, and rejoicing in his grace.

(3) Of self-denial: sacrificing self, and submitting fully to the will of God

(4) Of faith and hope: believing and trusting in the truth and goodness of the promises of God.

(5) Of vigilance to watch against enemies and perils.

(6) Of perseverance: holding on his way.

4. A pilgrim's resources.

These are generally of a very humble character. No chariot, or retinue, or luxuries. No ease, or rest, or worldly pleasures. But he must have

(1) His *staff* on which to lean. And this is the pledged promise of God, that his own presence shall go with him, and never, never leave him.

(2) His provision. Bread and water given him from heaven. The true manna and the streams of salvation. "If any man thirst," "Lord, evermore give us," &c.

(3) His houses of entertainment. Places where he can be welcomed to the hospitable board, and chamber of repose. These are the ordinances of religion, and the various social and private means of grace. "The Lord is my shepherd," &c.

(4) Suitable raiment, and especially sandals for his journey. "Thy shoes shall be iron and brass," &c. "Feet shod," &c.

APPLICATION.

1. How really happy is the Christian pilgrim. His sorrows and crosses will soon be over, and that forever. His present comforts and blessings are rich and numerous.

2. How glorious the end of his journey. The heavenly Jerusalem. The city of God. World of light, and life, and glory.

3. Urge sinners to set out on this spiritual pilgrimage.

LXV.—THE CHRISTIAN SOLDIER.

"A good soldier."—2 *Tim.* ii. 3

THE text is equally applicable to the private Christian, as to the apostle or bishop of Jesus Christ. All disciples are alike engaged in spiritual warfare. All are called to fight the good fight of faith, and to endure hardness as good soldiers of Christ Jesus. Martial language is often applied to the servants of God. And true religion involves in it a necessary and continued conflict with sin and the powers of hell. Observe,

I. *The Christian Soldier becomes such by a voluntary Enlistment into the Army of Jesus.*

He abandons his former course, and freely and cheerfully surrenders himself by faith to God. He ceases to be an enemy, which he was in his carnal state in the enmity of his mind. He has felt the

evil of opposing the counsel and authority of God. He has been convinced of the folly and infatuated wickedness of fighting against God, and now he accepts of God's gracious offer, and voluntarily engages to war against all evil, and to devote himself fully and forever to the service of the Lord.

II. *The Christian Soldier is clothed in the Armor of Salvation.*

This is fully described by the apostle, Eph. vi. 13.

(1) It will be seen that the loins are to be girt with truth.

(2) The breastplate is to be righteousness.

(3) The shoes or sandals, the preparation of the gospel of peace. Then there is,

(4) The shield of faith.

(5) The helmet of hope. And the offensive weapon is,

(6) The sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. The whole of this armor is to be used in connection with the spirit of incessant prayer. For the apostle adds, "Praying always," &c. Now this is the authorized legitimate armor to the preclusion of all other. No other will secure us from evil, or give us victory over the enemy.

III. *The Christian Soldier fights under the Standard of the Cross.*

The cross is that which is the centre of attraction to all the soldiers of Jesus. This is that by which the conquests of the Saviour are effected, and his spiritual dominions enlarged. This is the power and wisdom of God to the pulling down of the strongholds of sin; and this is the object of glorying to all the disciples of Christ, "God forbid that I should glory," &c.

IV. *The Christian Soldier is commanded by Jesus, the Captain of Salvation.*

Christ is emphatically styled the "Captain of their salvation," Heb. ii. 10. He has gone before his followers, and overcome in their nature all our foes, and was made perfect through suffering. He leads and commands all the spiritual army of God. He was beheld by John as seated on a white horse, having a bow and crown given unto him, and going forth conquering and to conquer, Rev. vi. 2. As their captain Jesus possesses every qualification to encourage his troops, and to head them in all their conflicts, until they have finished their course, and "fought the good fight." He has given express orders, and specific directions, for infallibly ensuring success to all who fight under his banner He is their captain and commander to the exclusion of every other. He is infinitely wise,—undauntedly courageous,—invincibly strong,—compassionately tender,—inviolably faithful,—and ever victorious.

V. *The Christian Soldier has to wage War with many Enemies.*

He has to wrestle with flesh and blood; to overcome the evils of his own nature,—the unsubdued corruptions of his own heart. Within are fears, and doubts, and unbelief, much ignorance, self, pride, &c. These must be subdued. All slain. Flesh mortified. Spirit have the ascendency and reign. There are also *foes without*,—the *world*, in all its evils and opposedness to God. With these are leagued the *powers of hell*,—Satan and the legions of darkness With these enemies there is manifest kindredness and combination. United they are formidable and dangerous. To wage uncompromising war, and overcome them, is the duty and end contemplated by the soldier of Christ. After all, for the Christian's encouragement, they are represented as being subject to God's controlling power, finite, of limited means of evil, and have, in myriads of instances, been triumphantly vanquished by the soldiers of Christ.

VI. *The Christian Soldier must Fight and be faithful unto death.*

His campaigns will extend through life, and the last enemy he must conflict is death. His martial toils must be patiently and meekly borne, and his defensive and offensive fighting maintained, until he tramples on the neck of the king of terrors, and exclaims, "Thanks be to God, who giveth me the victory," &c.

VII. *The Christian Soldier shall receive a Glorious and Eternal Reward.*

Having suffered with Christ, they shall be "glorified together," Rom. viii. 17. Having overcome they shall have dominion, Rev. ii. 26; be clothed in white raiment, Rev. iii. 5; sit with Christ on his throne, Rev. iii. 21; eat the hidden manna, Rev. ii. 17; and receive from Christ's hands the crown of eternal life, Rev. ii. 10.

APPLICATION.

1. Let the soldier of Christ rejoice in the sources of comfort, provision and victory, which are presented to him in the

word of God. How necessary that he keep his armor bright. That he be vigilant; zealous; devoted to God; valiant in spirit. That he cleave closely to Jesus; obey his commands, and tread in his steps.

2. Urge the thoughtless sinner to cease his rebellion, sue for mercy, and obtain a place and name in the army of Christ.

3 How certain the destruction of the enemies of Christ.

LXVI.—BELIEVERS SPIRITUAL MERCHANTS

"For the merchandise of it is better than the merchandise of silver, and the gain thereof, than fine gold."—*Prov.* iii. 14.

God often addresses men in his word under the character of buyers, and offers a variety of things unto them for their purchase. By the prophet Isaiah, he says, "Ho every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters; and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat," &c., Isa. lv. 1. He urges that "we buy the truth, and sell it not," &c. And shows the value of his blessings by comparing them to treasure hidden in a field, which a man possesses by selling all things that he had. Solomon represents the whole course of wisdom as one of merchandise, wherein it is better than the merchandise of silver, &c. Notice,

I. *The Propriety of the Comparison.*

The godly man is like unto a merchant. The calling of a merchant is,

1. Honorable.

Some of the most distinguished persons in the world have been merchants. A man who may happen to possess wealth, and lives in indolent luxury, is a contemptible character, in the eyes of mankind, compared with the enterprising merchant. The Christian is a dignified character. His calling is one honorable to his judgment, and spirit, and character. It is a course vindicated by wisdom, and which enjoys the especial approbation of God.

2. It is a calling of activity.

It involves the employment of energies, and the constant use of means for improving opportunities which may present themselves, &c. Much of the success depends on the measure of activity which is devoted, &c. So with the Christian merchant, his energies and means must be diligently and actively laid out. Fervent in spirit. Glowing with zeal. Giving all diligence, &c.

3. It is a calling of risk.

The merchant is liable to losses. His property is exposed to the contingencies of sea, and thieves, and fire, &c., &c. A merchant therefore must be vigilant, and employ great prudential care. Such also is the state of the Christian. He is the subject of numerous enemies. He is liable to many contingencies, therefore he must watch, and be vigilant, knowing that his adversary, &c. The apostle speaks of some who had made shipwreck, &c. "Hold fast that which thou hast," &c. Generally,

4. It is a calling of great profit.

The prudent, diligent merchant often greatly increases his wealth, &c. The diligent hand maketh rich. Godliness is profitable for all things, &c. It is profitable to body and soul. For time and eternity. Then observe,

II. *The Way in which the Christian Merchant should conduct his Affairs.*

1. To trade in proper commodities.

He must buy those things which are lawful, necessary, and useful. Of these there are (1) Food. Heavenly manna, the milk and wine of the divine word. (2) Raiment. The white linen, which is the righteousness of the saints. (3) Medicine. Spiritual eye salve, Gilead's balm, &c. (4) Riches. Fine gold, and the holy ornaments of the graces of the Spirit. The wise merchant will not expend his money in that which is not bread, or that which satisfieth not.

2. He must be prompt and regular in his engagements.

This will be the basis of his reputation, which will be essential to his prosperity. He must draw daily on the bank of heaven by fervent prayer, and honor all God's goodness by sincere and hearty thanksgiving. In all his concerns with God and mankind "He must do justly, love mercy," &c.

3. He must avoid speculations.

How many thousands have been thus ruined. The success of the few is the exception rather than he rule. Now the Christian merchant must be content to pursue the old path, the good way, and avoid a spirit of novelty and change Re

ligion, as God s work, admits of no improvement, and allows of no alteration or addition. Religious speculators of all men are most miserable.

4. He must constantly act so as to secure the patronage of the court of heaven.

All his means, and stock, and privileges are from above. He is a trading citizen of Zion. He sails under the flag royal of heaven. And this patronage is essential to his prosperity and success. God will order all things for him. He will bring all the ways committed to him to pass. His smile will ensure happy results, &c. Then he must do all, so as to honor God and show forth his praise.

III. *The Superior Advantages which this Merchandise yields.*

"For the merchandise is better," &c. Now the advantages of the spiritual merchant over those who trade in earthly treasures is manifest,

1. From the intrinsic worth of the commodities in which he trades.

He trades in spiritual things, adapted to the mind; necessary to the soul; suited to the powers and capacities of spiritual intelligences. Gold and silver are worthless here. The treasures of the earth are inapplicable, and therefore in reality valueless.

2. From the certainty of success ensured.

In human affairs all is contingent. The race is not always to the swift, &c. Human policy, diligence, &c. often unavailing. The Christian merchant has success guaranteed. He has God's promises and engagements, to render the results favorable and prosperous. If he trades therefore he succeeds. God will give him success. Providence and grace are combined to ensure it.

3. From the nature of the profits derived.

The advantages are of a better kind. The gain of an abiding and immortal character. His riches will not fly away. Nor pass into other hands. Or ever fail. They are exhaustless and eternal. He secures a portion, proof against time, death, and eternity. He obtains an inheritance, incorruptible, &c. An exceeding great and eternal reward.

APPLICATION

1. Invite sinners to invest all they have in the trade of wisdom Every thing else will finally fail. Nothing else superlatively important.

2. Urge believers to diligence in their heavenly calling.

3. Incite all wisdom's merchants to cheering hope as to the glorious results which shall crown their spiritual trading.

4. Those who trade in ignorance and sin will be ruined in body and soul forever and ever.

LXVII.—SAINTS THE RELATIVES OF JESUS.

"And he stretched forth his hand toward his disciples, and said, Behold my mother and my brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother and sister, and mother."—*Matt.* xii. 49, 50.

Jesus exhibited perfect rectitude in all the relationships he sustained. It is said of him at an early period of his life, that he went to Nazareth, and was subject to his parents, and grew in wisdom and favor with God and man. It cannot be supposed that Jesus would ever act at variance with the tenderest affection for his honored and beloved mother, especially when it is remembered, that while he was suspended in anguish on the cross he feelingly committed her to the guardian care of the disciple John. Yet it might appear from the paragraph with which the text is connected that he did not manifest to her pre-eminent attention. "Then one said," &c. All other things were subordinate with Christ to his Father's glory, and the great end of his mission to our world. Whatever aspect the conduct of Christ may appear to have to his relations after the flesh, it is full of comfort and promise to his true disciples to the end of the world. Let us contemplate,

I. *The spiritual Relatives of Jesus*

"The same is my mother," &c. Now this relationship is exceedingly close and intimate.

1. All true saints have one Father with Christ.

He taught his disciples to say, "Our Father," &c. "I ascend to my Father and to your Father," &c. He who testified to Christ as his Son, also says of all his saints, "I will be a Father," &c.

2. They have one nature with Christ

In our original state we have the nature of the earthly first Adam. This is that which is carnal, called the flesh. In regeneration we have the heavenly nature, that of the second Adam, the Lord Jesus Christ This is the new man which born of the Spirit is spirit.

3. They have one mind with Christ.

"Let the same mind," &c. No Christianity without having the mind of Christ. Now this includes that lowly mind, that devout mind, that holy and benevolent mind, which Jesus ever displayed.

4. They have one name with Christ.

If called saints, which signifies holy, it is through Christ being made unto them righteousness, &c. Christian embodies the very name of Jesus. Disciples, signify the followers, the pupils of Christ. Here then are the fourfold bonds of affinity and relationship to Christ. Observe,

II. *The great Principle of this Relationship.*

Now this is clearly expressed. "Whosoever shall do the will," &c. Now this great principle is obedience. It accords with other passages. "Ye are my friends if ye do," &c. "If ye love me, keep my commandments." My sheep "follow me." The will of God is the great rule of all righteousness. What God wills is essentially pure, and just, and good. Now we notice,

1. This will is revealed to us.

"God in times past, and in divers manners," &c. We have it fully, perfectly, and intelligibly in this blessed book. Nothing here superfluous. Nothing trifling. Nothing deficient. Now, it is the expressed will of God, that first of all sinners should repent of sin, and believe in Jesus Christ. And this lays the foundation for a proper superstructure of inward and practical righteousness.

2. Obedience to this will must be evangelical.

In Christ's strength. In dependence on his grace, by the aid of his Spirit.

3. Obedience to this will must be affectionate.

From love to God. "This is the love of God," &c. "The love of Christ constraineth us," &c. Not of legal terror. Not of pharisaic arrogance, &c. But of humble love. This obedience,

4. Must be full, not partial.

Have respect to all his commandments. Not dare to select. This would be presumptuous. Whatsoever he enjoins is right, and we must believe it to be so, and do it as such.

5. It must be constant and enduring.

It is service for life, for death, and for eternity This is also reasonable, and necessary, and best for us. He that endureth to the end, &c. Be thou faithful unto death, &c. Consider,

III. *The Advantages of this Relationship.*

1. Can you think of more exalted honor.

To be recognised as the kindred of Jesus, the blood-royal of heaven. Kings and priests to God. Fellow-heirs with the Father's anointed one. O what dignity! Glory which angel and archangel have not. It exalts over the loftiest seraphim and cherubim of the skies.

2. It must include the bestowment of the greatest blessings.

Christ will not withhold from his kindred any real good, they are co-sharers of all his bliss, and joy, and treasures. "All are yours," &c. Every blessing of time and eternity.

3. Everlasting security.

He will now guard and defend. Save them from their enemies. Keep them in the day of mortality. Own them in the great judgment. Elevate them to his right hand forever and ever.

APPLICATION.

1. Let Christians rejoice in the illustrious relationship they sustain.

2. Especially walk worthy of it.

3. Let degraded, wretched sinners now come and have life.

LXVIII.—THE CITY OF GOD, WITH ITS RIVER AND GLADDENING STREAMS

"There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God."—*Ps.* xlvi. 4.

THE text no doubt refers literally to Jerusalem, and the advantages derived from the river Kidron, with its streams. It must be manifest a river is of the very utmost importance to the health, and comfort, and prosperity of a city. None can dispute that the chief source of wealth and health to our metropolis is the river flowing through it. But the text is to be considered metaphorically in reference to the

church of God Zion is one of the appellations commonly given to her. The apostle says of the New Testament church—"Ye are come unto mount Zion,' &c. The church is the holy city of God. Let us then consider,

I. *The city of God.*

Now the city of God, or the church, must be considered,

1. As to its inhabitants.

Of whom is it composed? Of the communion of the faithful believers, separated from the world and consecrated to God. By regeneration partakers of the divine nature. And by adoption invested into all the privileges and immunities of the spiritual Zion. All spiritual persons are inhabitants of this spiritual city.

2. As to its governor and head.

This is the Lord Jesus Christ. "He is head over all things," &c. The Father hath given all things into his hands. He is Lord of all. And he has no deputy, no vicegerent. He says to all who dwell in it, "One is your master," and all ye are brethren.

3. As to its laws and regulations.

These are exhibited in the city statute book,—the living oracles of God. Now these relate to the admission of citizens; to the conduct of citizens towards the head, and towards all the brethren. They refer also to cases of offence and discipline. The New Testament is a perfect code of laws, here all our duty is fully and plainly revealed. Then,

4. As to the immunities and privileges of the city.

These are *numerous*, *precious*, sure, and everlasting. All the citizens are interested in the riches of the city. And these are infinite and exhaustless. They have a full supply from the *stores* of the city, and they supply all their need. They are beneath the protection and defence of the city. Angels are their guard, and God is their munition of rocks. No weapon formed against them can prosper. They are watched every moment. God keeps them as the apple of his eye, he holds them in the hollow of his hand. Then,

5. As to the dignified prospects of the citizens.

They are *eligible* to the greatest honors in this world and to unfading glories in the world to come. They have a title to immortality and eternal life Their names are enrolled on high. When they die, they become denizens of the city of the new Jerusalem, the palace of the heavenly king. Notice then,

II. *The river connected with this City.*

Now this river is the love or favor of God. All the blessings of the church of God are derived from this source. See Ps. xxxvi. 7, 8; also Isa. xxxiii. 21. Now the love and favor of God to his people may well be compared to a river.

1. Like a river it has its channel of communication.

The torrent may sweep over a district, but in doing so it is often destructive and soon subsides. But a river has its specific course and channel. Christ is the channel through whom all spiritual blessings are conveyed to the soul. He is the depositary of all the blessings both of grace and glory. God in all things treats with us by Jesus Christ. In him all fulness dwells.

2. As a river it is distinguished for its freeness.

Cisterns may be private property. Rivers are for the common good of the country through which they flow. Love and grace of God are for the common good of the church, for all the inhabitants of the city of God.

3. As a river it is characterized for its overflowing abundance.

All created sources may be exhausted. But God's infinite fulness cannot undergo diminution. The love of God cannot be bounded, it is illimitable. Its length, and height, and depth, and breadth, surpass all human understanding.

4. As a river it is noted for its constant perpetuity.

It is the same in all ages,—in all dispensations. It is identical with the unchangeableness of God. His mercy is from everlasting, &c. His mercy endureth forever, &c. "This is the God whom we adore." Observe,

III. *Its gladdening Streams*, &c.

"The streams whereof make glad," &c.

1. There are streams of ordinances, and these make glad the city of God.

What is it that makes ordinances so delightful,—so refreshing? It is because they are the wells of salvation. There they see God's beauty, and enjoy the beams of his smiling face. There they drink of the streams of salvation. Of the river of

God. Hence said David, "I was glad," &c. "I had rather be a door-keeper," &c.

2. There are streams of promise, and they make glad the city of God.

These are so many drafts on the bank of heaven, by which we often obtain a full supply from the riches of grace. How sweet and precious they are. How they support, and cheer, and sustain. All sure —and all ours by faith in Christ Jesus.

3. Streams of divine influences, and these make glad the city of God.

God pours out his Spirit, as streams of water on the parched ground. As showers upon the mown grass. Now these influences quicken, cheer, revive, comfort, and sanctify. Fill with hope and joy unspeakable, &c.

APPLICATION.

1. How honored and happy are the people of God.

2. Let us act worthy of our citizenship.

3. Invite those around to partake of our privileges and blessings.

LXIX.—MINISTERS FISHERS OF MEN.

"I will make you fishers of men."—*Matt.* iv. 19.

These words were addressed by Jesus to Simon Peter and to Andrew his brother. When Christ met with them they were following their occupation as fishermen, and he said unto them, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men." Their cheerful, prompt obedience is then related,—"And they straightway left their nets and followed him." Gospel ministers are fishers of men. Let us see,

I. *The Appropriateness of the Figure.*

Here several things are implied.

1. The world is the sea, the scene of their labors.

Its restlessness is employed to set forth the anxious, peaceless condition of the wicked. A fit emblem of our mutable, changing world. Its storms and dangers, indicative of the moral perils, and fearful dangers, to which in this wicked state man is exposed.

2. This sea is densely peopled with human beings.

As the sea contains a vast variety and great number of fish, so the world is full of human beings. The lowest computation, eight hundred millions, peopling it at the same period.

3. The world as a sea is the natural element of unrenewed men.

As the sea is the natural element of fishes. Ungodly, rebellious, unholy men, feel at home in a world bearing the same ungodly and rebellious features. Unrenewed men are of the world, worldly. They have its spirit, and they are its children.

4. Yet the world will be a sea of destruction to those who remain in it.

In it we are necessarily distant from God; from his likeness, favor, and salvation. And it is on account of the misery and danger of this state, that God has mercifully set on foot a blessed expedient, for rescuing immortal souls from the depth of its perdition.

5. The gospel is the net for the extrication of deathless souls from the sea of sin.

It is an instrument adapted to their condition, suited to their misery, and every way calculated to bring them to God, and the knowledge of his great salvation. It reveals their state, it exposes their danger; and it brings gracious help and deliverance unto them. It is full of argument and motive, and power: it is the grace of God bringing salvation.

6. But the gospel net must be employed.

It may be fit and suitable, but it must be cast into the sea. So the gospel must be preached; the word of salvation must be declared. And for this Peter and Andrew were called: and in this work they labored, and lived, and died. This is the work of the Christian minister, to preach the gospel to every creature within his sphere and reach. This will lead us to consider,

II. *The Duty to be discharged.*

1. This net must be employed.

It is God's appointed remedy. To the eye of the carnal it may appear a foolish, ill adapted means; but nineteen centuries has proved it to be the "power of God to salvation."

2. It must be constantly and diligently employed.

Diligence and zeal do not *necessarily* suppose corresponding success. But generally as the rule they do so. An indolent, indifferent fisherman, cannot be expected to succeed, as the laborious, faithful, and persevering do.

3. This not only must be employed.

Other means may be useful as auxiliaries, but the gospel is God's great and blessed remedy, for the restoration of sinners to himself. The gospel is the infinitely wise and merciful instrument for the deliverance of men from sin and the power of darkness. In the discharge of this duty,

(1) Constancy is necessary. The Christian minister must be "instant in season and out of season." In the morning and in the evening, not knowing which effort will prosper, this or that.

(2) Skill is necessary. The fisherman, taught by experience, adopts the most probable means of success. So must the Christian minister. He requires a large supply of knowledge and wisdom. He must be wise as a serpent, &c. So was the great apostle of the gentiles. Times, and seasons, and circumstances, must all be consulted.

(3) Perseverance is necessary. Often the fisherman may toil all night and take nothing. We cannot command success, but we can always be using God's own means, in dependence on his divine blessing. We may just add, that some Christian fishermen are more successful than others. But all and every one ought to be solicitous for it, and labor and pray for it. To urge to faithfulness in this duty, we have, the preciousness of souls,—the glory of God, and our own great and eternal reward, to influence us.

APPLICATION.

1 Let the Christian fisherman rightly understand his net, and the appointed way of using it. What attention and study is requisite. Who is sufficient for it? What need of reading, contemplation, and prayer

2. Let success be the grand object of attention. Nothing can make up for lack of this. To be learned, or even highly personally pious, ought not to satisfy the faithful minister. He ought to ask, Are souls saved? Do I bring men out of the sea of sin? Where are the living saved proofs of my ministry?

3. Should not our hearts be cheerfully and devotedly in the work? Constrained by the love of Jesus and love to souls, we should freely sacrifice ease and comfort, and all things, that the glory of Christ might be promoted, and immortal beings rescued from the wrath to come.

4. Our resources are infinite and exhaustless. All the fulness and efficiency of divine grace are at our service.

LXX.—MINISTERS SOWERS.

"Bearing precious seed."—*Ps.* cxxvi. 6

Jesus, in one of his most instructive parables, likened the preaching of the word to a sower, who went forth to sow, whose seed fell upon various kinds of ground. Some by the way-side, some upon stony places, some among thorns, and some upon good ground. In that delightful parable he might have especial reference to himself, and to his own labors. But he parable is equally applicable to all his servants, and to the labors of every Christian minister, who goes forth proclaiming the doctrines of the kingdom of God. The text truly expresses that character. He goeth forth "bearing precious seed." We ask then,

I. *What Seed the Christian Minister sows?*

The seed is the word of God. The holy truths of the divine mind. Those truths revealed expressly to make men wise to eternal life. Now this seed is to be sown in its original purity, without any admixture of what is human, and therefore probably erroneous. Now of this seed we notice,

1. It is living.

Word of life. Has in it the vital germ. So that if lodged in right ground, it will live and grow. It contains living principles and truths. It is the word of the living God. The living breath of the Holy Spirit from whom it emanated, and whose impress it bears. Not a dead letter, &c.

2. It is incorruptible.

Not only is it living, but as its source, it decays not, it perishes not. It produces spiritual life, which is not as the grass that withereth, but abideth forever. The fruit produced by this seed is incorruptible; it is the seed which is followed by the blessings of immortality.

3. It is precious.

So called in the text. Precious in its author and origin. Precious intrinsically. Precious in its effects. Precious as it has no possible substitute. It has been pre

cious to the righteous in every age. It was given to the Jews as a solemn, invaluable deposite. It was to them worth more than thousands of gold and silver. See how it was estimated by the psalmist, Ps. xix., and cxix. God has exhibited his regard of its value, in preserving it amidst the enmity of all generations, and maintaining its purity even to the present period. It is as precious as the air, for it is the atmosphere of the renewed life. As bread, for it is the staff and support of the saints. As light, for without it we should be enveloped in mists and darkness. It is the water of life, flowing from the throne of God and the Lamb. We ask,

II. *Where must it be sown?*

The world is the field. Every human heart is the ground where we must labor to deposite it. "Go ye into all the world," that is the sphere. "Preach the gospel to every creature," there is the soil for its reception. Every human being needs it. To every human being it is adapted. For every living soul it is provided and sent. Then wherever the Christian minister may be, he cannot be beyond, or without, the sphere of duty and labor. Wherever he meets with one of Adam's race, he may say, according to the very letter of his commission, "To you is the word of this salvation sent." We inquire,

III. *How it must be sown.*

We reply,

1. Skilfully.

There is art even in sowing, and there is much art in rightly preaching the word. For this, spiritual knowledge is indispensable. Wisdom from above. Judgment by which the word may be rightly divided, truly expounded, and properly diffused abroad. Auditories differ. The condition of the same congregation varies. Varied classes must be appropriately addressed. A suitable portion must be given to each order, and to each man. And in the word of God there is that endless richness of variety, which a skilful sower will turn to good account. What a model of skill do we perceive in the great apostle of the Gentiles. See his varied discourses, epistles, &c. It must be sown,

2. Faithfully.

The whole counsel of God with fidelity made known. No part compromised, or kept back, or adulterated. Every man left without just excuse.

3. Diligently.

The whole time of the ministerial sower is the Lord's. In the morning, and in the evening, and at noonday. It must be his meat, &c. Great end of life. Chief end of all his studies, and contemplations, and solicitudes, where and how he may best scatter the seed of eternal life.

4. Plentifully.

Not with sparing hand. No need of this. The sower's resources are infinite. Word of God, like the ocean, is calculated to fill the channels of the wide world. Enough for all, and for each, and for evermore.

5. Prayerfully.

For the divine blessing to succeed the labors and means employed. That he may make it to grow. That his rain and sun may produce vegetation and fruitfulness. That his glory may be promoted, and converts increase, until they become as the drops of the morning dew.

APPLICATION.

Learn,

1. The true nature of the ministerial office. It is to sow the word of God. To bear precious seed. Not a scientific or literary profession. Not a business of politics or commerce. But to spread divine truth. To preach the gospel of Christ.

2. The end of the ministerial office. The spiritual and eternal life of our fellow men. That they may be born again of the precious and incorruptible word of God.

3. The responsibility of those unto whom the word of God comes. They are responsible for hearing, receiving, and savingly profiting by it.

4. The assistance which all Christians may render in sowing the word of the kingdom. How very much they may assist their minister by counsel, kindness, co-operation, and prayer. Also by circulating the divine word. Teaching the rising age to read and understand it. By exemplifying its holy and benevolent fruit in their lives and conversation.

LXXI.—MINISTERS WATCHMEN

"They watch for your souls."—*Heb.* xiii. 17

THE apostle is referring to the duties which the churches owe to their pastors or rulers, and inculcates upon them obedience and submission, and this he urges from

he responsible station which they officially hold. For he says, "They watch for your souls as they that must give an account." The same view of the sacred office is given in the prophecies of Ezekiel. See ch. xxxiii. 1–9. Let us then look at the office of the watchman, and see the appropriateness of the figure when applied to the ministerial office. Observe,

I. *The Office of Watchman is one of Appointment.*

He is chosen and designated to the work by some superior authority. He is not self-appointed, &c. The Christian minister acts under the firm conviction and persuasion, that he is called to his office by God. That he is moved to it by the Holy Ghost, through the call and voice of the church. Those who invade the office through principles of avarice, or ambition, or love of ease, are not Christ's watchmen, but deceivers, both of themselves and others.

II. *The office of Watchman is an office of Trust.*

He is called to watch for the security of property, life, &c. To watch against the secret or open enemies of the city where he exercises his office. The inconceivable weighty trust committed to the Christian minister, is the charge of immortal souls. To watch for their instruction, admonition, warning, &c. To secure their best interests. To prevent their ruin by the great enemy. To rescue them from the path of evil. To restore them to the favor and family of God. To bring them to the enjoyment of present salvation, and finally everlasting life. The Christian watchman has two distinct departments of duty. One relating to unconverted sinners, whose conversion is to be the leading object of his efforts, and the other, the preservation of those who have believed, that they may not apostatize from the truth, make shipwreck, &c. What a trust! How vastly beyond all the treasures of earth. How much greater than the mere security even of the present life. The life of the soul. The interests of eternity. How sublime! How momentous! Who is sufficient for these things?

III. *It is an Office of Responsibility*

The watchman is responsible for the right and faithful discharge of his duties. He is responsible,

1. For his time.

That he truly occupies the sphere appointed. Not absent from his duty, &c. With what propriety this applies to the Christian minister He is ever to stand on the walls of Zion. To be instant in season and out of season.

2. For his diligence.

Not only duly, but diligently discharging it. How dreadful is apathy and indolence in the Christian minister.

3. For his vigilance.

The very term includes this. To watch, not sleep, or even doze. Lethargy totally unfits for being watchmen. Whoever sleeps, the Christian watchman must not. For the enemy sleeps not. Every hour is one of peril to souls. Then with unceasing assiduity, he must ever be on his tower, announcing the state of the city, and ready to warn against any enemy or peril.

4. For his fidelity.

Not to compromise the safety of the city. Not to deceive or neglect to warn. But with the utmost conscientiousness, with the fear of God before his eyes, and the love of souls in his heart, he is to act as with the judgment-seat of Christ immediately before him. "As one that must give account." He must be faithful to God. To sinners,—to saints,—to his own soul. And faithful to death.

APPLICATION.

We learn,

1. The solemn character of the ministerial calling. A calling which demands great personal piety, as well as high spiritual gifts and qualifications.

2. The arduous duties of the ministerial office. So arduous as to claim all the faculties of the mind, and all the energies of the body. A work for which an angel's resources would not be too great or extensive.

3. The great necessity that they should receive Christian sympathy and comfort. How the Christian watchman should be esteemed, and loved. How his hands should be lifted up and his heart encouraged. How his wants should be cheerfully supplied. How unceasing prayer should be presented to God on their behalf. And in this way they may be efficiently aided Their burdens may be lightened, and their anxieties and toil greatly lessened. Consider,

4 The personal responsibility of those

over whom they watch. The minister, if faithful, clears his own soul. On every man rests the responsibility of rightly improving and benefiting by the watchman's labors. "Whosoever heareth the sound of the trumpet, and taketh not warning, if the sword come and take him away, his blood shall be upon his own head," Ezek. xxxiii. 4.

5. Jesus, the great and blessed keeper of Zion, is the model every Christian minister should study and imitate. His zeal, his constancy, his fidelity, his unwearied perseverance, until he had finished all his work. He hath left Christian ministers an example, &c. &c.

MINISTERS BUILDERS.

"A wise master builder."—1 *Cor.* iii. 10.

THE Christian church is likened to a house, a temple, a city. Under each of these metaphors believers are considered as the materials—the stones of which it is composed. And the character the Christian ministry sustains is clearly the same. God is the great architect. Jesus is the foundation and head of the corner. Ministers are builders; as such the apostle Paul, keeping this idea in view, says of the church at Corinth, "According to the grace of God, which is given unto me, as a wise master builder, I have laid the foundation:" and of those who followed in his steps he says, and "another buildeth thereon, but let every man take heed how he buildeth thereon," &c. Observe,

I. *The Christian Minister is a Builder.*

II. *He ought to aim at being a wise Master Builder.*

I. *The Christian Minister is a Builder.*

1. He builds up the spiritual house or temple of God.

He is to labor to carry on this spiritual structure towards its final completion; towards its perfection. Its walls are to be elevated, until it is fit for the head stone.

2. He builds upon the one great foundation, Christ.

"Other foundation," &c. He is the chosen of God. The elect, precious, sure, and everlasting basis of this great and glorious structure. Here must rest the weight of every saved soul, and of the whole church.

3. He builds with the living stones of believers.

No other materials will be admitted by the great architect. To this the apostle obviously refers, when he speaks of some building with hay, straw, &c, material that will not stand the fiery ordeal of judgment. Improper persons may be added to the visible church, but the fire, which tries every man's work, will destroy them, and the builder will lose his expected reward. His work shall suffer loss, &c., see v. 13, 14, 15. Ministers are to preach the gospel that men may hear and believe; and when believers, that they may be built up, living stones in Christ's holy and living house.

4. He builds according to the divine word.

Here are all his directions given. Here he has all the implements or means of building provided. Here his duty, his encouragement, and his resources are provided. Well acquainted with its truths, and he cannot fail in obtaining a knowledge of his work, and of all things necessary for securing success in his undertaking. This leads us to consider, that the Christian minister,

II. *Ought to aim at being a wise Master Builder.*

But we ask,

1. What is implied in this?

Evidently it means to be qualified with every gift requisite for its arduous duties, sufficient knowledge of the divine word; a personal and experimental acquaintance with the principles and practice of Christianity; a clear understanding; a sound judgment; a ready perception, &c. Not a novice; not an ignorant person: but well instructed in the knowledge of divine things. It includes, too, the improvement of those qualifications, and the practical exercise of all the powers, &c., in this great work. To be wise and act wisely It also includes the efficient and successful character of the ministry, in carrying upwards the walls of this spiritual structure. "He that winneth souls is wise." We ask,

2. What is requisite to this?

Reading, meditation, and prayer; the exercise of the work; make it the preeminent object of our solicitudes, &c.; full consecration of all to God. We notice,

3. The motives which should urge to this.

(1) Our own success. For unless we are wise master builders our labors will be entirely in vain

(2) Our comfort and personal happiness. For if we feel rightly, we cannot enjoy real comfort, unless the pleasure of the Lord "prosper" in our hands.

(3) Our own safety, too, is deeply concerned: for unless we build wisely and successfully we may well doubt as to our call, &c., for the work. Our motives ought to be rigidly searched, examined, &c.

(4) Our final glory is identified with it. "They that turn many to righteousness," &c. The wise builder shall have joy and honor from his work in the day of the Lord. But the unwise laborer will only be saved himself, and "as by fire," v. 15.

APPLICATION

1. The subject is of great importance to the Christian ministry. Let it lead to self-investigation, &c.

2. It is of importance to all who profess to be a part of Christ's spiritual building. Are you of the saved? Living stones, &c.

3. How fearful the end of those who are merely hay, wood, stubble. The fire shall consume them.

LXXIII.—GOSPEL MINISTERS SHEPHERDS.

"The shepherds of Israel."—*Ezek.* xxxiv. 2.

THE prophet is referring to the indolent unfaithful shepherds who neglected the flocks committed to their care, and thus brought upon themselves the displeasure of God. It is, however, with the term itself that we have to do. Jesus Christ is the great and good shepherd, and ministers under him are the shepherds or pastors of their respective flocks.

It was the gracious promise of God that he would give his people "pastors according to his own heart," Jer. iii. 15. And the appointment of this office is directly designed for the comfort, well-being, and safety of the people of God. Observe,

I. *Christian Ministers as Shepherds have devolving upon them the care of Christ's Flock.*

Believers are likened to sheep,—the sheep of the Lord's pasture In their collective capacity, they are compared to a flock. The flock of God. They are exposed to many evils. Are surrounded by numerous enemies. Are liable to many wants and diseases. Are entirely insufficient for their own preservation, &c. To promote their comfort and safety, God sends his servants to take the oversight of them and to care for them as the shepherd careth for his flock. This is an office, then, connected with the appointment of God, and for which he gives every necessary qualification.

II. *Christian Ministers as Shepherds must feed their Flocks.*

They must do this by leading them into green pastures, &c.

(1) The pastures of the divine word. Where there is an exhaustless fulness and variety of refreshing promises.

(2) The pastures of divine ordinances. Where God showers down the manna of heaven,—bread of life,—the rich provision of his house. "I will abundantly bless her provision," &c. Now the shepherd is to render the word instructive and consolatory, and the ordinances refreshing and edifying. He is to do this by clearly explaining and opening the treasures of God's word. And by giving to each of his flock a portion of meat in due season.

III. *Christian Ministers as Shepherds are to watch over their Flocks.*

To warn them against danger,—"Warning every man." To admonish, to counsel, and to direct them into safe and plain paths. Their dangers are numerous. From the world, from Satan, from false professors, from their own weakness, &c. Against each and all these sources of evil, the shepherd is to watch for the safety of the flock. How necessary then is a spirit of holy energy, vigilance, &c.

IV. *Christian Ministers as Shepherds are to regard especially the Weak and afflicted of the Flock.*

Sheep are peculiarly liable to disease. In Christ's flock many are the infirmities and sicknesses which prevail. What spiritual weakness,—what imperfection of knowledge,—what self-trusting and complacency. "Who can understand his errors?" How often is spiritual disease evident in the mind, in the heart, in the spirit, in the conversation, in the walk and

conduct. Now it is for the shepherd to abor for the healing of these maladies. To lead his afflicted people to the great physician, and to the balm of Gilead. He is to bind up their wounds; to strengthen the weak; to recover the straying; and to seek the perfection and eternal well-being of all.

V. *Christian Ministers as Shepherds must give an Account of their Flocks.*

They are responsible to God. God will demand an account. He is now observant of all they do. He will summon shepherds and flocks before his solemn tribunal. Faithful shepherds shall receive from the hands of the great shepherd "a crown of glory that fadeth not away, &c., 1 Peter v. 4.

APPLICATION.

1. How truly solemn is the office of the Christian shepherd—the charge of souls. The responsibility of deathless souls.

2. How necessary for its right discharge are divine qualifications and help Christ is the great model,—the Bible, the pastor's guide. The grace of God his daily and sufficient resource.

3. Faithful shepherds should have the kind sympathy and aid of all the members of the church. How the apostles were thus assisted; by pious deacons,—often by holy women, &c.

4. How glorious the meeting when all the flock of God, with each shepherd, shall appear before Christ to receive his blessing, even life for evermore.

LXXIV.—MINISTERS STEWARDS.

"And stewards of the mysteries of God."—1 *Cor.* iv 1.

A STEWARD is one who presides over the household affairs of a family, and is appointed to make provision for it. The church of Jesus is a family. A family of regenerated persons, the sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty. It is a household. "The household of faith." God is the father of this family, for they are all the children of God by faith. Jesus is the exalted and blessed elder brother, with whom is invested supreme and universal authority over it. And Christian ministers are stewards to live and labor for its welfare and comfort. The text refers,

I. *To the Ministerial Office.*

"Stewards." And,

II. *To the great Subject of their Labors.*

"The mysteries of God." The text refers,

I. *To the Ministerial Office.*

"Stewards."

1. This is a subordinate office.

"Stewards," not lords, not masters. All power and lordly authority belongs to Jesus. He is the head of the body,—the church. To the disciples Jesus said, "One is your master, even Christ, and all ye are brethren." Christianity has suffered irreparable loss from the lordly spirit and conduct of those who have occupied the ministerial office.

2. It is an appointed office.

Not a self-assumed one. No man puts himself into the stewardship. The apostle Paul was exceedingly susceptible on this point. He often refers to his call of God, &c. "Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called," &c., Rom. i. 1. "Paul called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ," &c., 1 Cor. i. 1. "Paul an apostle, not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ," Gal. i. 1. The Christian minister is not called miraculously as was Paul, or by an audible voice, as most of the apostles, but he professes to feel moved to undertake the stewardship by the voice of the Holy Spirit, the constraining power of the love of Christ, and the invitation of the church of God, which is the pillar and ground of truth.

3. It is an exalted office.

Workers together with God, 2 Cor. vi. 1. Of the same vocation with Jesus, the prince of preachers—that great shepherd of the sheep. Every other calling is insignificant when compared to that which has immediately to do with the glory of God, and the eternal salvation of human beings.

4. It is a responsible office.

Every steward is responsible to his lord. So the Christian steward must give an account of himself and of his charge to God. He is responsible for the *talents* with which he is furnished. For the *time* and *opportunities* with which he is intrusted; for the right discharge of his *duties;* for *faithfulness* to the interests of his Lord; and for *affectionate fidelity* to the souls of his flock. How great the trust! How weighty the charge! How solemn the responsibility!

"'Tis not a cause of small import,
The pastor's care demands,
But what might fill an angel's heart,
And fill'd a Saviour's hands."

Notice,

II. *The great Subject of their Labors.*

"Stewards of the mysteries of God." The mysteries of God are the great truths of the gospel. The gospel as a whole, is a clear revelation of the love and mercy of God to mankind, in and through the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ. As such it is adapted to the plainest capacity. And as such when expounded by its great teacher, it is said, "The common people heard him gladly." Yet this gospel has its great and sublime truths. It has its lofty and glorious doctrines. To these we are referred by the apostle Paul.

1. The mystery of Messiah's person and incarnation.

"Great is the mystery of godliness," &c., 1 Tim. iii. 16; Luke i. 35.

2. The mystery of salvation through his cross.

Christ crucified, the great theme of the gospel ministry, is still to the Jews a stumbling block, and to the learned speculating philosophers of the world, foolishness. Yet to the believer, it is the power of God to salvation, 1 Cor. i. 18–25.

The mystery of the resurrection of the body.

Read the truly sublime representation of it as given by the apostle, 1 Cor. xv. 12–54. Now the Christian steward is to publish and expound the mysteries of God. He is to make known all the divine counsel. To break to the household of Christ's family the bread of life. To study the variety of character and state of each member. To give the sincere milk of the word to babes. To give strong meat to the mature and aged disciples, and a portion of spiritual food to all in due season. In doing this effectually, and being faithful to the solemn trust, it will behoove him to be diligent, fervent, studious, prayerful. Much reading and meditation will be indispensable, and he must give himself wholly to the work.

APPLICATION.

1. Let the stewards of Jesus reflect often on the solemn, arduous nature of their work.

2. Let them use all possible means for being thoroughly and ably furnished for fulfilling their calling.

3. Let Christian stewards have a deep place in the affectionate regards and prayers of the church. "Brethren, pray for us," &c. Hold up their hands; encourage their hearts, and pray down blessings upon their souls and work.

LXXV.—WORD OF GOD COMPARED TO FOOD.

"Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God."—*Matt.* iv. 4.

The text is the reply of Jesus to the tempter, who urged him to employ his power in changing stones into bread. To this Jesus replies, "It is written, (Deut. viii. 3,) Man doth not live by bread alone, but by every word," &c. Christ's reply to Satan included this idea, that although bread is the staff of life, yet God can sustain and keep alive by any thing, or by any means he pleases. Bread will not invariably ensure life, but the will of God is ever sufficient, under all circumstances, to do so. But the soul hath its necessities as well as the body, and it is a clear and important truth, that the food of the soul is the word of God. Thus Job said, "I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary food," Job xxiii. 12. Consider,

I. *The Propriety of the Metaphor.*

II. *Its peculiar Characteristics.* And,

III. *Our Duty with respect to it.*

Observe then,

I. *The Propriety of the Metaphor.*

The word of God may be likened to food.

1. As it is essential to the life of the soul.

The body cannot live without food. The soul in like manner cannot have spiritual life, without receiving a constant supply of the divine word. The word of God is the incorruptible seed by which believers are begotten, and by which they become the children of God. And this life is sustained by the same word, which as milk nourishes, so that they grow thereby. We live, by the word of God living and abiding in us.

2. As it is the source of strength.

Food when digested gives strength and

vigor to the system, and by it the necessary supply of nutrition is communicated. So the word of God renews the strength of the soul. By it, holy desires and purposes receive energy and power. By it, the whole spiritual system is rendered healthy and powerful. With the vigor it imparts, the Christian is sufficient for all he duties and engagements to which he is called of God. Observe,

II. *Its peculiar Characteristics.*

This food is,

1. Heavenly and divine.

It cometh down from above. The mind and will of God flowing to us from his heavenly throne on high. Not human wisdom. Not of the earth, but of God, and celestial in its nature and source.

2. It is superabundant.

Not only enough, but infinitely more than the largest capacity can fully receive and digest. The word of God in its Spirit and fulness seems to resemble the infinity of its blessed author. The most studious, the most devout, the most diligent peruser of the holy scriptures, can only approach, as it were, the margin of that ocean of blessedness the word of God contains. The Bible is a never-failing, exhaustless mine of unspeakable treasure. Observe,

3. Its endless variety.

In temporal food God has given us not only plenty but variety. He has given man a right to every wholesome herb of the field,—the fruit of the earth, and of every clean beast, or fowl, or fish, Gen. ix. 2–4. The word of God possesses still greater variety. In it there is every thing to enrich the sanctified imagination, to enlighten the understanding, to counsel the judgment, to purify the conscience, to exalt the affections, and to meet all the spiritual desires of the soul. It contains food for every grade of character,—for every age and condition,—for all ranks, and degrees, and classes, in the kingdom of Jesus Christ. For the young and old; for the weakly and the strong; for pastors and people; for every member of the household of faith. Notice,

4. Its gratuitous bestowment.

The spiritual food of the word of God, is given by God to his people. He bestows it without any consideration or condition on our part. It descends as freely as the rain or snow from heaven. In this God acts according to the exceeding riches of his grace. This food is not to be bought by human price, or obtained by meritorious labor. Notice,

5. Its universal communication.

God giveth food to every living thing. He feeds all the beasts of the field, and the fowls of the air. All living creatures wait upon him, and he supplies the wants of all. So the food of the divine word is the common property of the whole family of man. It is suited and sent alike to all. It is the bread of life to a perishing world. Notice,

III. *Our Duty with respect to it.*

In reference to this heavenly food,

1. We should thankfully receive it.

God sendeth it. He gives it freely to us. Ungodly men despise it, reject it, and thus starve and die. We ought to receive it with sincerest gratitude, with all readiness and gladness of soul. Such a reception all give it, who know their spiritual condition.

2. We should believingly feed upon it.

The word may be in our dwellings, may be the subject of our reading, and yet not profit us. By faith we make it our own. By faith it enters the heart, and thus only is indeed real food to the soul. Faith lives on what God has spoken, this faith is the life of the Christian.

3. We should grow, and improve by it.

The word of God exerts a holy transforming influence on the soul. Where God's word is cordially received, it will be exhibited in the spirit, life, and conversation. This food should make us strong in the things of God, and fit for every good word and work. We should grow in knowledge and prudence, in love, and in general holiness of heart and life.

4. We should constantly apply to it.

Every day we should gladly use God's word as the portion of our souls. Especially in the morning of the day we should avail ourselves of it, that we may profitably meditate upon it all the day long. We shall need it during our whole probation; in life, sickness, and death. Then we shall exchange it for the fruit of the tree of life in the paradise of God.

APPLICATION.

1. Urge the importance and value of the word of God upon all.

2. Upon the especial attention of the people of God.

LXXVI.—WORD OF GOD LIKENED TO MEDICINE.

"He sent his word and healed them."—*Ps.* cvii. 20

The morally diseased condition of the human race is the subject of repeated testimony, in the holy scriptures. The description of Israel is not unsuitable to the whole family of man; "The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint, from the sole of the foot," &c., Isa. i. 5. Of the moral malady of the soul, David was deeply conscious; hence he prayed, "Lord, be merciful unto me, heal my soul, for I have sinned against thee." Hence also he prayed on another occasion, "Have mercy upon me, for I am weak: heal me, for my bones are vexed; my soul is also sore vexed." It is probable that the text refers to bodily diseases, and the mercy of God communicated in healing them in answer to prayer. But the same gracious power and means will heal spiritual maladies, the moral diseases of the soul. Observe,

I. *The diseased State of the Soul.* And,

II. *The Influence of the Word in healing it.* Notice,

I. *The diseased state of the Soul.*

1. The disease itself.

It is sin. An unholy nature. Derangement of the moral powers of the mind and heart. All impurity is disease. All sin is unhealthiness. Consider,

2. Its source and origin.

This is the fallen condition of our nature through the first transgression. Adam transmitted to his posterity his own depravity. As the fountain was corrupted, the stream necessarily became impure. Diseased by his transgression, his children derived the germ of moral evil hereditarily from him.

3. Its universal influence.

It affects the whole man. Every faculty of the mind, and passion of the soul, are diseased. In the understanding there is blindness. In the judgment error. In the will perverseness. In the conscience defilement. In the affections corruption and earthliness. In the thoughts and desires evil, and that continually.

4. Its increasing virulence.

It deepens and expands, and becomes more powerful with the growth and habits of men. It yields not to education,—paternal influence,—example, &c. It never exhausts itself. It is not curable by change of place or society, or any self-exerted moral restraints.

5. Its fatal tendency.

It is a disease which ever ends in death. It is the deadly leprosy. The fatal plague No alternative but cure or death. Notice,

II. *The Influence of the Word in healing it.*

It is not the application of the mere letter of God's word, which removes the guilt and depravity of the soul. The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin. And it is by the Spirit's influence on the heart that the old depravity of the soul is removed, and all things become new. The Spirit changes the heart, and transforms it from a state of stone and impenitence, to a state of susceptibility and love to God The Spirit quickens, renews, and sanctifies the soul; yet it may be truly said, that the word of God heals the soul.

1. As it reveals the divine recipe for our salvation.

It makes known the one great and infallible remedy. It announces the one physician. The one catholicon for all moral diseases of mankind.

2. As it makes known the course necessary to our restoration.

It shows what we must forsake. What habits abandon,—what society relinquish. It shows the necessity of reflection, turning from all evil, genuine repentance, and hearty faith in the atoning death of the Lord Jesus Christ.

3. It publishes the offer of healing to every diseased soul.

Not only describes our sickness and misery, but makes known God's gracious desire to restore us to health, and happiness, and eternal life. It expostulates and says, "Why will ye die," &c. "Is there no balm in Gilead," &c. "Wilt thou be made whole," &c.

4. It affirms the ability and readiness of Jesus to heal all who come to him.

It exhibits his gracious regards, and his tender solicitudes. It refers to the prodigies of his healing power in the days of his flesh. It avers his sufficient ability to save all, and to the uttermost who come unto God by him. It re-echoes his compassionate invitation, "Come unto me," &c

5. It is in the cordial reception of the word that restoration is enjoyed.

When the sick believed in Christ's word they were healed. When the father believed in Christ, his son was restored. So

the woman of Canaan: so also when the multitude believed Peter, who preached the word, they were baptized into Christ, and added to his church, Acts ii. 41. See also Rom. x. 17. Hence it is styled the "word of salvation." And the gospel is represented by the apostle as the "power of God," Rom. i. 16. A knowledge of the truth makes free. Reception of the truth is connected with regeneration. And abiding in the truth is essential to spiritual growth, and progress in divine things, John xvii. 17.

APPLICATION.

1. How thankful we should be for God's word.

2. Its design should never be forgotten. It is sent to heal our souls. It is the message of eternal life.

3. Its possession involves great responsibility.

4. Its rejection is that unbelief which is threatened with damnation.

5. Invite the sin-sick of every class, to hear and believe, and be healed.

LXXVII.—THE WORD OF GOD COMPARED TO LIGHT.

"The entrance of thy words giveth light."—*Ps.* cxix. 130.

"And a light unto my path."—*Ps.* cxix. 105.

LIGHT is the emblem of Deity, "For God is light, and in him is no darkness at all" 1 John i. 5. Christ is the light of the world. Saints are children of the light and of the day. The gospel is the glory of God, shining forth in the face of Jesus Christ. The holy scriptures are as a light shining in our dark and benighted world. The pious psalmist felt they were to him "as a light unto his path," and rejoiced in the experience expressed in the text, "The entrance of thy word giveth light." Notice,

I. *The Resemblance of the Divine Word to Light.*

II. *The Nature of that Reception we should give it.*

III. *The important Benefits we derive from it.*

I. *The Resemblance of the Divine Word to Light.*

1. There is the manifesting character of light.

Light makes manifest. Through it we behold the wonders of the divine works. Thus the word of God is a revelation of God's mind, and of his saving work. It is the visible discovery of God's love and mercy to our world. What could we know of God,—of creation,—of ourselves,—of the divine will,—of eternity, without the light of God's blessed word?

2. There is the clear character of light.

Through its transparent medium we behold things distinctly and fully. So the word of God is a clear medium of knowledge. We have in it, the truth, distinctly and amply. It is not like the vague equivocal answers of the pagan oracles, or the ambiguous guesses of human fallible knowledge, but it makes known every great and important subject so lucidly, and yet so simply, that a wayfaring man need not err therein.

3. There is the beautiful character of light.

It is light which invests every external object in nature with its color and hue. So all the subjects of God's word possess a celestial beauty and heavenly hue. It is unlike every other volume, and as superior as the heavens are higher than the earth, or the works of God superior to those of men. This will apply to the narratives, histories, prophecies, doctrines, and poetry of the sacred volume.

4. There is the purity of light.

Water is easily defiled or poisoned. The air is liable to the influence of contagion. But light, fair emblem of its author, ever retains its transparent purity. Such is the purity of God's word. It has no admixture of error. It is as pure as the mind of its immaculate source. It is all pure, and God has preserved it through all the ages since it was written from human corruption. "Every word of God is pure." Notice,

5. The universal character of light.

God has diffused it throughout our world. It is one of God's great blessings to the earth on which we dwell. It is sen for all, free to all, and enjoyed by all, (except the blind.) Such is the character of God's word. His gift to the whole world. It is designed for the enlightening of every human being. None are excluded from its benefits but those who dwell in pagan darkness, or wilfully close their eyes against it. Observe,

II. *The Nature of that Reception we should give it.*

1. We should behold the light.

God calls us to do so. He has given us the faculties to understand it. And he calls us to open our eyes, and, with attention and the spirit of seriousness, to know the things which God hath revealed, and which belong to our peace.

2. He calls us to rejoice in it.

It is, and ever ought to be, pleasant to see the light. But the light of God's word is still more precious, and ought to excite in our minds the liveliest emotions of grateful joy. We ought to hail the light of God's word with fervent thanksgiving to his holy name.

3. He expects our improvement from it.

The entrance of God's word must be experimental. It must enter the heart. Be received into the affections. Retained in the memory. And "dwell richly" in us. Influencing our thoughts, and purposes, and actions. "Thy word have I hid in my heart," &c.

III. *The Important Benefits we derive from it.*

"The entrance of thy words giveth light." By the cordial reception of God's word we obtain,

1. The light of the divine favor.

His word, says the psalmist, converteth the soul, Ps. xix. 7. By receiving his word, we yield to his divine authority, and own his right to exercise his authority over us, John v. 24, viii. 32.

2. The light of holy joy.

His word rejoices the heart, Ps. xix. 8. It is as a spring of living water, spreading happiness and peace through the soul. The word impresses its own likeness and spirit on the soul. See 1 Pet. i. 8.

3. The light of cheering hope.

By the regenerating power of the incorruptible seed of the word of God, believers are begotten to a lively hope, &c., 1 Pet. i. 3. As the word converts and renovates the soul, so it opens before the mind the prospect of heavenly and eternal glory. And the entrance of God's word gives light under all the changing circumstances of life. It gives light in adversity,—in trouble,—in temptation,—in affliction,—under bereavements. And it illumines the dark valley and shadow of death. The divine word is the light of God's sanctuary,—of the Christian family,—of the believer' closet.

APPLICATION.

Learn,

1. How thankful we should be for the word of God.

2. With what diligence we should peruse its sacred contents.

3. With what prayer for the Holy Spir it's assistance should we devoutly meditate upon it.

4. How anxious we should be for its diffusion. How desirable that all the world should possess it, and walk in its saving, joyous light. "O Lord, send out thy light and truth," &c.

LXXVIII.—THE WORD OF GOD LIKE A FIRE AND HAMMER.

"Is not my word like as a fire? saith the Lord and like a hammer that breaketh the rocks in pieces?"—*Jer.* xxiii. 29.

The faithful Jeremiah is here called by God to prophesy against false prophets, and to denounce the displeasure of God against such as mixed their own dreams and imaginations with the word of God. Hence the Lord says, "I have heard what the prophets said, that prophesy lies in my name, saying, I have dreamed, I have dreamed. How long shall this be in the heart of the prophets that prophesy lies in my name?" &c. Then God says, in reference to these prophets, "The prophet that hath a dream, let him tell a dream," that is, let him only make it known as a dream, not as a revelation from God. "And he that hath my word, let him speak my word faithfully. What is the chaff to the wheat? saith the Lord." Then follow the words of the text, "Is not my word like as a fire" &c. Observe,

I *What the Text implies.*

Various figures are employed to describe the word of God, and these figures have reference to the influence which the word exerts, and the effects which are produced by it. As a sword, it pierces and cuts asunder. As a medicine, it heals. As a lamp, it illumines, &c. The figure of fire evidently implies, (1) That man is the subject of dross. That he requires refining Or that, (2) he has within him much that is as stubble, that must be burnt up. Perhaps the prophet had his mind directed to chaff which was cast into the oven &c

The figure of the hammer implies, the hard and rocky condition of the human heart. And this is directly taught in God s word. He is said to have a "heart of stone," Ezek xi. 9. Like the rock, (1) Man's heart is barren. (2) Hard. (3) Resisting. And this is the natural state of every unregenerate soul. Notice,

II. *What the Text affirms.*

For the interrogatory phraseology of the text evidently sets forth the truth of God's word,—As a fire, and as a hammer, &c.; the word of God,

1. Is a fire.

Celestial fire. Fire from heaven. Holy fire. Fire that searches the conscience. Fire that burns up the dross, and purifies the soul. Fire that changes into its own nature all that comes into contact with it. And it contains threatenings which will consume all sinful tares with unquenchable fire. This divine fire burns out the carnal principles of the heart. It burns up all earthliness and worldly-mindedness,—all inward sin. It sends its flame into all the interstices of the soul. And sanctifies even the imaginations of the heart. "Sanctify them through thy truth, thy word is truth," John xvii. 17. See John xv. 3. God's word,

2. Is a hammer.

Adapted to impress and to break even the rock in pieces. As a hammer, it breaks in pieces the obduracy of the heart,—the impenitence of the heart,—the unbelief of the heart,—the apathy of the heart. It produces conviction of sin,—contrition for sin,—separation from sin. We see it exerting this power, (1) On the children of Israel at Bochim, when an angel spake unto them the word of the Lord, "And the people lifted up their voice and wept," &c., Judg. ii. 4. (2) On the Israelites in the time of Ezra. See Ez. ix. x. (3) On the people under Peter's sermon; "Who, when they heard this, they were pricked in their hearts, and said unto Peter, and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?" Acts ii. 37. So also in the case of the jailer at Philippi, &c. In every age of the world, God's word has proved itself as a hammer breaking the rocks in pieces. In our own country, how many skeptical, profligate hearts have been broken in pieces. The history of modern missions also confirms the truth of the text. This hammer has been exerted on every grade and character of human beings. The wild Hottentot,—the savage New Zealander,—the untutored American Indian,—the idolatrous Brahmin,—the sensual Hindoo. And everywhere it has been as a purifying fire, and as a hammer breaking the rock in pieces.

APPLICATION.

Learn,

1. The importance of maintaining the purity of God's word. Science, philosophy, and literature, are utterly powerless as to the renewal of the heart of man. They may civilize, and polish, and expand the mind, &c., but they cannot convince of sin, or convert the soul. This is to be effected by the word of truth, the gospel of God, the hammer of the holy scriptures.

2. The necessity that exists for the employment of the divine word. The hammer must be used, the word of God must be preached. "For faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." See Rom. x. 14–17. Now the employment of the divine word devolves upon the church. Jesus has left his word with his people, that they may convey it into all the world, and exert its influence on every creature. However excellent in itself, or adapted to save the soul, it is powerless, unless it be brought to bear upon the hearts of men. The hammer is adapted to break the rock, but it must be lifted up and made to fall with power upon it. The word of God is adapted to save the soul, but the hand of the servant of God must bear it, and smite with it the consciences of sinners, as Peter, and Paul, and the apostles did. We must not forget,

3. That men may resist the word; and in this man differs from the rock. Hence the word is full of moral power, the power of truth, and the power of grace, but it exerts no physical energy on the mind, but leaves every man accountable to God Then we must urge men to hear, to consider, to believe, &c.

4. The incorrigible sinner it will destroy. To such it is the savour of death unto death. "What shall the end be,' &c. "How shall we escape," &c

LXXIX.—WORD OF GOD LIKENED TO THE RAIN AND SNOW

"For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it to bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: so shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth," &c.—*Isa.* lv. 10, 11.

All the elements of nature are under divine control. God directeth and disposeth of all things according to the purpose of his all-wise and righteous pleasure. He gave nature her original laws, and he is the great source of that order and harmony which prevails throughout his works. In all the diversified kingdoms of nature, he has caused one thing to depend upon another. Hence the fruitfulness of the earth greatly depends on the produce of the clouds. These empty their moistening contents upon the thirsty earth, and thus cause it to bring forth and to bud, and also to yield to the husbandman a supply of fresh seed-corn, and sufficient bread to those who labor for its cultivation. Observe then the analogy in the kingdoms of nature and grace, between the rain and snow and the divine word. We see the resemblance,

I. *In the Origin of both.*

The rain, although naturally produced, is yet obviously the work and gift of God. He prepareth it; storeth it up; bears it on the wings of the wind; and freely pours it upon the earth. So also the word of life is his own production. He inspired the minds of the writers with the ideas, thoughts, and gave them infallible directions and aid in revealing his mind to mankind. The scriptures are thus directly from heaven, and bear the sublime impression of their divine and blessed author. We see the resemblance,

II. *In the Mode of communicating both.*

He giveth the rain,

1. At peculiar seasons.

Periods when its bestowment is desirable and necessary. So God gave his word, during the various seasons of our world's history, in divers manners, and at various periods, to the fathers by the prophets. Just as God exercises his infinite skill in giving rain from heaven—so also did he give the words of truth and salvation to the world. He gives the rain

2. Abundantly.

Hence the earth lacketh not this great and essential blessing. So also he has fully, abundantly revealed his will in his holy word. We possess fulness of spiritual knowledge. Enough for all the purposes of personal piety, present usefulness, and to make us meet for eternal glory. The apostle says, "It is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." 2 Tim. iii. 16. He communicateth the rain,

3. Discriminately.

We say not according to his sovereignty, for he exercises that glorious prerogative in all his works and government. But the rain is not given to all countries in like manner, as to seasons, abundance, &c. So with respect to his word, he deposited it originally with the seed of Abraham. To them pertained his oracles. They had God's word, while the rest of the nations were in darkness. They had the copious showers of truth, while other lands were sterile and barren as to the true knowledge of God. So it has ever extensively been, and so it is even yet. As a nation we have been greatly favored. But other countries are only now receiving in their own tongues the wonderful testimonies of God's word. He communicates the rain,

4. Freely, gratuitously.

It is one of his free gifts to man. It comes bountifully from his beneficent and gracious hand. So also the word is his free gift to man. A gracious revelation of his love, and, like every other blessing, conferred without money and without price. We see the resemblance,

III. *In the Design of both*

The rain is sent to make the earth fruitful, to cause it to bring forth and bud. Now we observe,

1. The earth, like the heart of man, without this would be unfruitful.

The earth requires rain,—is barren without it. The heart of man requires the word of God, and is dark, hard, frigid, and barren without it. Nothing will answer as a substitute for rain, and nothing meets the exigencies of the soul but the word of God. We observe,

2. The adaptation of both for the end contemplated.

Rain softens and moistens the earth, and produces fruitfulness. The word of God enlightens, impresses, alarms, con

vinces, and converts. It is the instrumental means of regeneration and holiness. Wherever it is received it produceth these happy and delightful effects. They resemble each other,

IV. *In the Results arising from both.*

The rain and snow answer the end for which they are sent. Thus God's word shall not be ineffectual. It shall accomplish God's pleasure. That is, it shall produce results pleasing to God; answer the great end he contemplated; produce fruit to the honor and glory of his name.

1. It shall make barren souls fruitful.

See Rom. vi. 22. It has ever done this. Wherever it has been borne, sin and iniquity have been effaced, and holiness and goodness produced. Men have been turned from sin to God, from darkness to light, &c. What a striking example is the case of the Corinthian church. 1 Cor. vi. 9, 11.

2. It shall increase the means of doing good.

"Give seed to the sower." The fruitful earth yieldeth thirty, sixty, and a hundred-fold. Thus too all converted persons are as seed-corn, they have been produced for the reproduction of others. They shall be useful as well as fruitful. Thus as disciples are increased the power of doing is increased to the church. They are additional lights in the world, &c.

3. It shall reward the laborer.

The Christian minister is a sower, and his reward is given from the fruitful earth. He depends upon the earth yielding her increase, the earth depends upon the rain, and the rain upon God. The minister's chief reward will be the trophies of the truth. Those converted by the gospel. And if it is the joy of the Saviour, how much more should it be the joy of the servant. Phil. iv. 1; 1 Thes. ii. 19.

4. It shall satisfy the author.

"It shall prosper whereto I send it." God will be eternally glorified in the achievements of his word. God will derive united and eternal praise from the spirits of the glorified, who have been made fruitful and righteous by his holy word. It will attain all God intended and expected from it.

APPLICATION.

1. Let us not be unmindful of the source and value of temporal blessings. God sendeth us rain from heaven, fruitful seasons &c.

2. Let spiritual blessings especially be gratefully received. The word, next to the Son and Spirit of God, is the greatest and most precious of these.

3. Have the ends and purposes of God been answered in giving us his sacred and precious word. Do we bear fruit to the glory of his grace.

4. Unfruitfulness under superior privileges will greatly add to our condemnation at the great day.

LXXX.—THE GOSPEL TREASURE

"But we have this treasure in earthen vessels that the excellency of the power may be of God and not of us."—2 *Cor.* iv. 7.

THERE are two distinct similes in the text. One relates to the ministerial office. Ministers of Christ, whether apostles or evangelists, are earthen vessels. Vessels to hold and convey their contents to others. The gospel is presented to us in the text under the similitude of treasure, and this treasure is borne in the earthen vessels of the ministry, and the design of this arrangement is, that the glory may all redound to the power of God. At present we confine our thoughts to the gospel as a treasure.

I. *It is so on account of its intrinsic Excellency.*

In it is concentrated all that is really valuable and precious to man. It is a treasure,

1. Of divine knowledge.

The knowledge of God,—of Jesus Christ—of immortality and eternal life.

2. Of divine grace.

The tender compassion of God to the soul. The free bounteous favor of the Lord. Favor better than life. It is described as the "unsearchable riches of grace,"—"The grace of God," &c.

3. Treasure of divine comfort.

It bringeth the unspeakable treasure of a peaceful conscience to every believer. It includes the consolations of God's love, and the comforts of the Holy Ghost

4. Treasure of heavenly glory.

It makes believers citizens of heaven. Subjects of the heavenly kingdom. Exalts them to sit in heavenly places. Gives clear title to the heavenly inheritance; to the throne and crown which never fade away. It produces heaven upon earth,

and offers the enjoyment of life in heaven, for evermore.

II. *It is a Treasure as it confers upon Man that which is most precious.*

1. It is a treasure of food.

It gives the bread of life—manna from heaven. It spreads the festive board. Invites to the marriage feast. See Isa.; Matt. xxii. 2.

2. It is a treasure of medicine for sin-sick souls.

Here is the balm of health. The elixir of life. Medicine for every malady of the diseased soul. That which produces health, and vigor, and life.

3. It is a treasure of raiment.

It confers the costly robe of salvation. The garment of praise. See Psalm xlv. 13.

4. It is a treasure of ornaments and jewels.

It gives golden graces to the soul. It decorates the spirit with all the real and unperishing ornaments of love, meekness, gentleness, and truth. It confers that which is far better than gold, or silver, or pearls. It impresses the soul with the likeness of God, and transforms into his glorious image. 2 Cor. iii. 18. Observe,

III. *Some of the Characteristics of this Treasure.*

1. It is spiritual.

Not material treasure. Not earthly and liable to decay. Not suited to the body or influenced by time. But a treasure suited to the mind. Spiritual blessings adapted to the spiritual necessities and capacities of the soul.

2. It is invaluable.

We cannot conceive of its cost to deity. We cannot conceive of the worth of the blessings it confers. It gives life—eternal life. There is no substitute for it. The whole globe is worthless compared to it.

3. It is abundant.

It is boundless as God's infinite love and power. It enriches every believer with infinite good. It has enriched countless myriads. There is a sufficiency for an infinity of worlds. It is utterly exhaustless. Then,

4. It is enduring treasure.

It is not liable to be lost, or decay as earthly treasures. The moth or thief cannot destroy or steal it. It enriches its possessor throughout life, in death, and through all the ages of ages of the world to come. It is a kingdom which does not pass away a crown that fadeth not; an inheritance in corruptible, &c.

5. It is a treasure freely offered to all.

The gospel is designed and adapted to all men. Christ has sent it to all the world. Every creature has a gracious right to its blessings. And nothing is required but to feel our need, and cordially receive its riches

6. It is a treasure which can only be secured in the present life.

We have the mine in this world, and we must seek, and explore, and obtain it now, or be poor forever. The gospel is adapted to man as a sinner and probationer The gates of the celestial city are only open to those who, by repentance and faith, enter in during the period of that probation.

APPLICATION.

1. With what joy should the treasure be received. The tidings of it should fill with gladness, with exultation, with delight.

2. With what care it should be secured. We should guard against the enemy who robbed our first parents. Against shipwreck. We should think of Demas, &c. And with holy jealousy and vigilance preserve and secure it. Think of the inspired admonition, "Hold fast that which thou hast that no man take thy crown," Rev. iii. 11.

3. With what thankfulness should it be enjoyed. We ought every day to give God thanks for it. It ought to fill us with joy unspeakable and full of glory.

4. How we should urge poor sinners to come and be enriched by it. Ministers should urge it,—all Christians should speak of it. Tell the miserable and perishing of that treasure which will enrich them for both worlds. Tell them how freely it is offered, and beseech them to seek it now, "For now is the accepted time," &c.

LXXXI.—THE GOSPEL TRUMPET

"The great trumpet shall be blown, and they shall come which were ready to perish."—*Isa* xxvii 13.

Doubtless this prophecy had a literal reference to the restoration of the Jews through the instrumentality of Cyrus. A prophecy which had a most exact and faithful fulfilment. But we intend the ac

commodation of the text to the joyful proclamation of the gospel of Christ. Blessed as were the captive people of God when they heard the proclamations of Cyrus to return to their own country; yet more blessed are they who hear the joyful tidings of salvation, as published by the heralds of the cross. Let us notice, in applying the great trumpet to the gospel,

I. *The Significancy of the Metaphor.*

II. *The Nature of its Proclamations.*

III *The Blessedness of its Effects.*

I. *The Significancy of the Metaphor.*

The gospel may be likened to a trumpet,

1. As an instrument of sound.

It is intended to make specific announcements,—to arrest attention,—to give directions. Now this is the design of the gospel. It announces the grace of God to man; his love to a perishing world; and a free and full salvation to every repenting believing sinner. But it is described,

2. As a great trumpet.

Great in its author; great in itself; great in its design; great in the universality of its application to the whole world; great compared with the use of all other trumpets. Immediately connected with the great God,—the great Redeemer,—the great concerns of souls,—and the great destinies of the eternal world. Now consider,

II. *The Nature of its Proclamations.*

1. It proclaims peace between God and man.

This was the song of angels, "Glory to God," &c. Preaching peace by Jesus Christ. It is the ministry of reconciliation. Thus as trumpets proclaimed the cessation of arms, and gave the announcement of peace, so the gospel proclaims the favor and peace of God towards our fallen world.

2. It proclaims war between man and sin.

Sin has the usurped dominion over men. It reigns as a despotic tyrant. It keeps the sinner in a state of hostility towards God. But the gospel brings the recipient of it to wage war with all moral evil. He now becomes a soldier of Jesus Christ. He puts on the gospel armor, and fights the good fight of faith. He rallies round the standard of the cross, and obeys the sound of the great trumpet in this holy and spiritual war.

3. It proclaims the assembling together of the army of Jesus.

Thus, as trumpets were employed to bring together the scattered troops, and likewise to collect the tribes in the desert for their religious assemblies, the gospel calls men to the assemblies where the soldiers of Jesus meet together, and where the congregation of the Lord worship his holy name. "Forsake not the assembling," &c.

4. It proclaims the acceptable year of the Lord.

The jubilee was introduced with the sound of trumpets. This was indeed a joyful sound,—to the poor,—to captives,—and to the people in general. Thus Jesus at the commencement of the gospel jubilee, sounded the great trumpet,—"And when he had opened the book he found the place where it was written, The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor," &c., Luke iv. 17–20. Consider,

III. *The Blessedness of its Effects.*

"They shall come," &c. Observe,

1. The characters.

"Ready to perish." A striking description of unconverted sinners. In a state of misery, wretchedness, and disease. Slaves groaning in their chains. Borne down by the yoke of the tyrant. Without strength And as to their own power, without hope Exposed to eternal death. In the gall of bitterness, &c. In the horrible pit, &c.

2. The influence the gospel exerts.

They must of course hear it. And the text supposes that they hear it with interest —with joy: so hear it, as to be influenced by it. Now this influence is seen in the movement produced—"For they come," &c.

(1) From whence? From the dreary region of death. From the land of oppression. From their exiled slavish condition.

(2) To what do they come? They come to the kingdom of God's grace. To the cross. To the house of prayer. To the fellowship of his saints. No longer aliens or foreigners, but fellow-citizens, &c.

(3) How do they come? With weeping on account of their sins. With gladness on account of their redemption. With faith in the gospel's proclamations. With heartfelt joy to receive the blessings of salvation.

APPLICATION.

1. How blessed are our ears, who have been favored with the sound of the great trumpet.

"Jesus! transporting sound!
The joy of earth and heaven;
No other help is found,
No other name is given,
By which we can salvation have,
But Jesus came the world to save."

2. The dignified yet responsible office of the Christian preacher. To blow the trumpet. To convey the sound of mercy to the perishing. To blow it loudly, distinctly, incessantly.

"O for a trumpet's voice,
On all the world to call," &c.

3. The duty and interest of sinners. To hear, and come to Christ for life and salvation.

4. Neglecters and despisers are their own destroyers.

LXXXII.—THE GOSPEL REPRESENTED AS THE WATER OF LIFE.

"And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely"—*Rev.* xxii. 17.

THE word of God contains many free and delightful invitations to lost and perishing sinners: many of these are met with in the prophecies, in the gospels, and in the epistles. But as if the Holy Spirit, in concluding the holy writings, wished to give one enlarged and expansive view of the divine benignity to man, the copious, tender, universal, and urgent entreaty of the text was penned. To explain and enforce the invitation will be the end of our present address. Observe,

I. *To what the Invitation refers.*

II. *The Persons to whom the Invitation is given.*

III. *From whom the Invitation is issued.*

I. *To what the Invitation refers.*

It is to the water of life." By the water of life we clearly understand the blessings of salvation, the enjoyment of the favor and love of God. This salvation is variously represented. As treasure to the poor. As a robe to the naked. As medicine to the sick. As food to the starving. And as the water of life to the perishing, thirsty sinner.

The stream from the smitten rock was a striking type of it. The prophets often dwelt with delight, when using the metaphor, "Ho, every one," &c. "With joy shall they draw water," &c. The psalmist said, "There is a river," &c. "In that day," said Zecharial "a fountain shall be opened," &c. Jesus very often employed the same expressive phraseology, "In that last great day of the feast," &c. "To the woman of Samaria," &c. Thus the language of the text. Now this is called the water of life, as.

1. It springs from the fountain of life.

See ver. 1, of this chapter. So Christ said let him come unto me. He is the source of all life, and these streams flow from the ocean of his godhead. "Every good gift," &c. All the blessings of salvation are the gifts of his grace.

2. It communicates spirit and life.

A man may have natural life and yet be dead to God, and to holy and heavenly things. And this spiritual death, if not removed, will end in eternal death. Now it is only by the reception of the gospel stream that the soul is quickened, and renewed, and lives.

3. It terminates or is consummated in eternal life.

Spiritual life of God in the soul is the germ of eternal life. This is "life eternal," &c.; this is the first degree, the first-fruits, &c. Now the saving grace of God not only renews, but sustains: by it we not only begin, but continue to live; and it matures and perfects the life of God in the soul, and then at last it gives us the full ocean of the blessedness of eternal salvation.

II. *The Persons to whom the Invitation is given.*

The invitation respects two kinds of characters.

1. Those who feel need, and desire it.

"Him that is athirst."

(1) Now thirst arises from conscious need. So, many are conscious of their need of Christ—they admit it and feel it. By the word read or preached they have been convinced of their true state and condition.

(2) Then thirst is a condition painful and distressing. Many of you have felt this. Know how it rendered every thing worthless and unsatisfying.

(3) Then there is no substitute for fluid

to the thirsty. Nothing will do instead. So to the convicted sin-smitten sinner; the man truly sensible of his state, cannot find in all the world an equivalent, &c. Now these are invited—conscious, anxious penitents. Then the invitation refers,

2. To all who are willing to receive it.

'And whosoever will." There is one condition—"will." No respect to your character, age, sex, or condition. No respect to merit, or righteousness, or fitness, but to the will. If you will, you may, and shall have the water of life, and if you will not you must perish, and hat too because you will perish, by rejecting the merciful offer of a gracious God. Observe,

III. *From whom the Invitation issued.*

1. The Spirit invites.

Now every invitation contained in the holy scriptures is the invitation of the Spirit. "Holy men of God," &c. "All scripture is given," &c. In those passages we quoted all were indited by the one blessed Spirit of God Just as a monarch or nobleman issues his mind by the ambassadors of his court, and the servants of his palace So Christ by the Spirit inspired men to speak his word and mind to the human race. Remember, the words of the scriptures are the words of God.

2. The church invites.

The church is the bride, the Lamb's wife. And she is expected to feel and make Christ's interests her own, and he has commanded her to shine and speak, and witness before men that they may be saved. Now the church, possessing the Spirit, wishes what the Spirit wishes, and enters into all the mind of the Spirit. The people of God under all dispensations felt and acted thus. Thus Moses invited his father-in-law, "Come thou," &c. Thus David prayed, Ps. lxvii. 1, 2. But more fully did the church of Christ by her apostles and evangelists, go forth and invite. So they were commanded to visit the whole world, and invite every creature.

3. Every one who hears invites.

"Let him that heareth." That is, all who have heard, obeyed, and found the water, may and must invite. No specific call, office, or talents are requisite. As a Christian you may do it. As a Christian you ought from love to God and love to man. But perhaps the idea is this, that all who hear must invite those beyond, then those must invite the still more distant, until all the earth shall see the salvation of God. In our

APPLICATION.

We notice,

1. The duty and interest of those invited. You are to "come" to God's "gospel." To his "throne of grace." And you are to "drink." Enjoy and profess his salvation. Approach first, and then drink of the water of life freely.

2. Let this course be urged upon your practical attention. Think of the worth and preciousness of the water of life Think of its abundance and freeness. Think of your present and eternal interest. Come now. Come as you are. Come all of you, and take of the water of life freely.

3. The duty of the church and of every member. To echo the will and the words of the Spirit earnestly, prayerfully, and continually.

LXXXIII.—SIN THE LEPROSY OF THE SOUL.

"And immediately his leprosy was cleansed"—*Matt.* viii. 3.

ONE of the results of sin is the fearful catalogue of bodily diseases which it has introduced. Man was formed free from affliction, sorrow, and pain; neither was he liable to death. But sin has filled the world with disease and misery. Hence,

"Fierce diseases wait around,
To hurry mortals home"

Every part of the body is alike vulnerable, alike in danger, alike susceptible of affliction and agony. Some are tedious in their progress, and men groan beneath them for years. Others are rapid in their course, and speedily cast their victims into the gloomy grave. Some are curable, while others defy the physician's skill and power. During Christ's mission on earth, he employed his benevolent power in healing the diseases both of body and mind. Our text refers to one delightful instance, to which we invite your attention on the present occasion. Consider,

I. *The Individual referred to.*

"A leper." Perhaps no condition was

more truly awful and distressing. Leprosy was common in Palestine, and is so still in various parts of the east. At present we shall consider it as exhibiting a striking representation of sin, the leprosy of the soul. Now the leprosy,

1. Was generally hereditary.

Thus from Adam and Eve, sin has spread into every country, and down through every generation. Men are not only born under the effects of the guilt of sin, but under its depraving and defiling power.

2. It was small in its first appearance.

A small spot on the countenance, of an inflamed red character, was the first sign. Those unacquainted with it might suspect no danger. Now sin is little in its beginning. Look at children in their tempers, &c Look at individuals who at one period were amiable, and then became thoroughly vile.

3. It is deeply seated and inveterate in its nature.

The heart and blood are under its influence So with sin;—the heart is the seat, he soul is the spring and root of all the evil.

4. It is universal in its prevalence.

All the man affected. From the head through all the extremities. No part of a leper clean. So with sin and the sinner,—"the whole head," &c. All the faculties of the soul. All the senses of the body, &c.

5. It is very loathsome in its appearance.

The eyes and countenance assumed a horrid and disgusting appearance; painful; and it rendered the person a burden to himself, and life itself a curse; such also is sin,—it renders man abominable to God and holy angels, and fills him with anguish and misery.

6. It excluded from society and rendered them objects of terror to all around.

However close by the ties of kindredness, their breath was dreaded, it was the breath of disease, to touch them was to receive their malady. Not allowed to mix with the healthy, or to go into the congregation of the Lord. Travellers feared to meet them, &c. So sin infects and excludes from the family and presence of God.

7. It was incurable by human power, and generally produced a most awful death.

It raged until the whole person became one mass of foulness and pollution: then the vital organs being powerfully attacked death terminated the career of suffering Such, also, is the leprosy of the soul. No man can recover himself from it. No created power can restore. It never cures itself. "Sin when it is finished bringeth forth death." Such was the condition of the man who applied to Christ. Notice,

II. *His Address to the Redeemer*

"Lord, if thou wilt," &c.

1. It was an address of humble respect.

"Lord." He acknowledged him as a dignified person. Received him as the Messiah, worshipped, &c.

2. It was associated with faith.

"Thou canst." Not ordinary faith. He would not have said so to any other person on earth. Christ had the power, and this was the power of God.

3. It contained an affecting appeal as to his misery, and Christ's goodness.

"If thou wilt thou canst make me clean." Nothing so important to him as this. This was his heart's desire. He appealed to Christ's disposition, "If thou wilt," &c.

III. *The Conduct of the Saviour.*

1. Christ responded to his appeal.

And said, "I will." His love and mercy as great as his power. Christ's willingness is established on the most immoveable truths and facts.

2. His word was omnific, and conveyed the healing power.

He might have willed it, and effected it silently, but he spake, &c.; so he did in creation, so in all his miracles. At the grave of Lazarus,—to the devils who possessed the demoniac,—to the raging sea &c.

3. He put forth his hand to testify to his cleanness.

A touch would infect, and in any case ceremonially defile, but JESUS now touched him, to show that the foul disease was gone. What a cure!—how complete!—how instantaneous!—how free!—how precious!

4. He sent him to the priest that his recovery might be duly attested.

The priest was appointed of God to testify when a person was cleansed and fit for society. Now this case might have been disputed, &c. He was to go at once, for fear the priest might hear, and through prejudice refuse to attest &c.

5. He was to present a gift unto the Lord.

See Lev. xiv. 10, and if poor, v 21. Now Christ enforced this to show that he came to fulfil the law, &c. And to elicit a grateful spirit from the leper. Now let me turn to the leprous sinner.

(1) See how you are to obtain healing and purity. From Christ. By personal, humble, and believing application to him.

(2) See the way in which Christ will receive you. He will freely and graciously deliver. He desires to do this, &c. He can do it now, &c.

(3) See what Christ expects from those he has healed. Dedication of yourselves and all you have to the Lord.

APPLICATION.

1. Bless God for health of body.

2. Especially be anxious for health of soul.

3. Praise God for the almighty Saviour, and the means of spiritual health and felicity.

4. We now invite all to be healed.

LXXXIV.—SINNERS CAPTIVES.

"Deliverance to the captives."—*Luke* iv. 18.

THIS is a part of the Saviour's first sermon. He began his public ministry by exhibiting the riches of his grace to sinners. His ministry was eminently one of mercy and love. In him dwelt an infinite fulness of grace and truth. He was in all things a Saviour suited to the exigencies of our ruined race. He came to redeem us from all iniquity, and from its effects both in this world and in that which is to come. Hence, knowing man's enthralled condition, he proclaimed, "Deliverance to the captives." In the text observe,

I. *The State of Mankind supposed.*

"Captives." That is, in a state of vassalage. One who has been made prisoner in war. Man fell through the agency of Satan, and became the victim of his infernal tyranny. Now, as captives,

1. Sinners are in bonds.

Enfettered in spirit, and bound with the manacles and chains of iniquity. Of these bonds there are ignorance,—superstition,—slavish fear. Now, as captives,

2. Sinners are in exile.

Excluded from their original country and inheritance. Far from God, and from holiness and peace. In an enemy's territories, &c. They are captives,

3. In darkness.

It was an ancient practice to put out the eyes of distinguished prisoners of war, and otherwise to maim them. See the case of Zedekiah, Jer. xxxix. 7. Now Satan, as the god of this world, blinds his victims He keeps them in a state of darkness, &c

4. In prison.

Under the reign of Satan, sinful men are as in prison. Strangers to holy freedom and spiritual liberty. As such, his captives are,

5. Wretched and miserable.

Their professed pleasures are fictitious—imaginary—mere delusions. They are without peace; without solid enjoyment, and without hope. This captivity is connected,

6. With extreme peril of eternal ruin.

It is the design of Satan to involve his victims in everlasting misery. He intends their unending ruin. Hence, those who are not liberated from his power, and translated out of his kingdom, will go down into the dark abyss of wo, to be tormented with the devil and his angels forever and ever. Observe,

II. *The Deliverance announced.*

This deliverance has been rendered,

1. Possible through the redeeming power of Christ.

Jesus is the deliverer. He came to rescue us from the power of the devil. He has bruised the head of the serpent. He has overcome all his enemies by his triumphs on the cross, and his resurrection from the dead. He hath opened a glorious highway for the return of Satan's captives to the liberty and favor of God,—from the regions of death to the kingdom of life This deliverance,

2. Is proclaimed in the gospel.

It is the design, the great end of the gospel, to offer liberty to the bound, and deliverance to the captives. The gospel is the gracious annunciation of hope and life to wretched perishing sinners.

3. This deliverance is offered to all.

God addresses men as sinners, and all such are invited to enjoy the redemption of the gospel. There is no restriction, no limitation. Whosoever will, may freely come, and not one of such shall be cast out

4. This deliverance is obtained by faith. The hearty belief of the gospel proclamation gives instant deliverance to the captive. The truth known, at once makes free. The gospel to every believer is the power of God to salvation. God says, it is not by works of righteousness, but by grace, and through faith. But this faith is the exercise of the heart, and embraces the whole gospel, and yields implicit homage to the authority of Christ.

5. This deliverance is connected with blessings of indescribable value.

It is connected with remission of sins; renewal of the heart; adoption into God's family; enjoyment of internal peace; and the hope of eternal life.

APPLICATION.

1. To enslaved sinners. How deplorable your state. How infatuated to reject the deliverance. O be wise and turn unto the Lord.

2. To emancipated freemen. Rejoice. Bless your deliverer, Jesus. Show forth his praise. Tell others of it.

"Point dying sinners to his blood,
And say Behold the way to God."

LXXXV.—THE GOSPEL THE CHARTER OF LIBERTY.

And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."—*John* viii. 32.

We perceive from the preceding verses that many of the Jews had believed on the Saviour. This was an event highly joyous to Christ, and of the utmost benefit to themselves. But the Redeemer, knowing the difficulties and dangers of their path, now endeavors to strengthen and comfort them, by urging the importance of steadfastness and constancy upon them, ver. 31. How very necessary is this truth to be remembered, that we must not only receive but continue in Christ's word; and thus only can we be his disciples in deed, ver. 31. And it is only thus we can realize all the advantageous ends of our high and heavenly calling. In this way we shall "know the truth, and the truth," &c. We have to consider in the text,—*The Truth*,—*The Knowledge of it*,—and *Its Influence*. Let us consider,

I. *The Truth.*

It is a term variously employed in the holy scriptures. It means often, *veracity* in opposition to falsehood; *substance*, in opposition to types and shadows. "The law was given," &c. It often means the whole word of God. It is one of the titles of the *Messiah*, "I am the way, the life, the truth." "He is faithful and true." In the text it clearly refers to Christ's holy and blessed gospel. Now the gospel includes every other definition of truth. It is *veracity*, nothing fallacious in it. It is *substance*, no mere shadows. It is full of Christ's person and glory. Gospel of Christ. Its histories are truth; its revelations are truth; its doctrines are truth; its promises are truth; it is divine truth; heavenly truth; gracious truth; infinitely precious truth; eternal truth. Consider then,

II. *The Knowledge of the Truth*

Now this may,

1 Be merely mental.

By hearing or reading the gospel we may know all its facts and statements the same as we may know any thing in science or history. Now thus we may go through the whole length and breadth of scripture statements, without any effect being produced on the heart or life. There may be a state of non-belief, or it may,

2 Be experimental.

That is, when I have tried and tested and felt what is represented as truth; when I *visit* the places described by the *traveller*,—when I *try* the experiments stated by the philosopher,—when I *prove* the medicine prescribed by the physician. Now this is experimental knowledge, to which the soul can bear witness. And all who cordially hear and believe the truth know it thus. The woman of Samaria knew it thus. The man born blind knew it thus. Saul knew it thus. All who are converted know it thus. Now this experimental knowledge is *alone saving*. No extent of speculative knowledge can give true comfort, or lay the foundation for eternal glory. Observe

III. *The Influence of the Truth.*

"It shall make you free." Now the bondage or slavery of man is here premised. And such is the declaration of the holy scriptures. All men are naturally the slaves of sin and the devil. In the prison-house of depravity, guilt, and condemnation. Now an experimental knowledge of the truth makes free,

1 From the condemnation of guilt.

We are all guilty, and against all, the sentence of condemnation has gone forth. He that believeth not," &c. Now the truth points to the only way of pardon and life. It exhibits the surety, the sacrifice. It shows where God has punished sin, and where he will forgive the guilty. "Be it known unto you," &c. It makes free,

2. From the enslaving fetters of depravity.

Forgiveness is not holiness. We must be changed,—converted,—born again,—sanctified. The truth points to the source of regeneration. The blood of sprinkling. The fountain opened. And by knowing the truth we are sanctified by it. "Sanctify them," &c.

3. From harassing fears of wrath.

Guilt and sin are ever associated with fear and dread. The sinner, whether he looks within, behind, onwards, or above, he is alarmed. God is against him, &c. Under the curse. But the truth reveals the Holy Spirit, the pacifier, comforter, the pledge of divine love, the earnest, &c. of glory. And in receiving the truth, he receives the Spirit of truth, who fills the mind with peace and joy through believing. He bears witness, &c.

4. From the anxious cares of life, and the dread of dissolution.

Nothing more is necessary to our misery than for the worm of care to be gnawing upon the soul. To have anxiety as our constant guest. Fearing a thousand imaginary ills. Never content. Never really happy. Especially cherishing dark forebodings of death, and gloomy, horrifying views of the grave. Now the truth makes free from all these. It points to Christ's universal reign. It shows that all things are managed by infinite wisdom and love. That all things shall work together, &c. That the presence of Christ shall be ours in life and death, and that to live will be Christ, and to die everlasting gain.

APPLICATION.

1. Let believers rejoice in their spiritual freedom.

2. Avoid the trammels of human authority in matters of religion.

3. Invite sinners to receive the truth.

LXXXVI.—THE GOSPEL DISPENSATION AN IMMOVEABLE KINGDOM.

"Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear."—*Heb.* xii. 28.

The apostle had just been presenting in contrast the two dispensations:—that of the law and the gospel; of Moses, and Christ; Sinai and Zion. Having shown the vast superiority of the Christian economy, he then urges reverential obedience to the authority of Christ, "See that ye refuse not," &c., ver. 25. Then he refers to the power which accompanied his voice when he gave the law, as contrasted with that which he now possesses as heir of the worlds and Lord of all. Then follows the practical and experimental deduction of the text, "Wherefore we receiving," &c.

I. *The Kingdom specified.*

II. *To the Reception of this Kingdom.* And,

III. *The Duties arising therefrom.*

I. *The Kingdom specified.*

Now this kingdom is clearly the spiritual rule or reign of Jesus in the soul. The Christian dispensation is a kingdom. As such John the Baptist cried, "The kingdom of heaven is at hand." Into this by faith and through regeneration we are introduced: born into it of water and the Spirit. This is the opposite of Satan's kingdom and of this world, which are in hostility to God. But the text relates not only to that, but to the spiritual reign or kingdom which is erected in the soul; of which Christ said, "The kingdom of God is within you." Now this kingdom is a kingdom,

1. Of spirit and power.

Not a lifeless form; not a mere name or profession. It is a vital and blessed reality. Life of God in the soul,—power of salvation diffused through all its energies and powers.

2. It is a kingdom of experience and practice.

It has its seat in the affections, and is connected with our warmest emotions. It is love constraining the soul, and this is followed by righteousness of life. Holiness to the Lord is the essential characteristic of this kingdom. Not a system of ceremonial institutions,—"Not meat and drink, but righteousness," &c. Not saying, "Lord, Lord, but doing the things," &c.

3. I. is an abiding and changeless kingdom.

"Cannot be moved." Now in this the kingdom of Christ differs,

(1) From all earthly kingdoms. Where are the renowned empires of ancient times? Where the proud Assyrian,—the rich Persian,—the learned Grecian,—the mighty Roman? Where their ancient capitals, and their splendid palaces? Where indeed is the ancient kingdom of which Jehovah at one time was the only king. Palestine is in the hands of the false prophet, —the temple is razed,—the city itself in ruins.

(2) In contrast with preceding dispensations. The patriarchal first appears in rural simplicity, the head of the family being both its lord and priest. Then followed the Mosaic,—at first with its moveable tabernacle, and afterwards with its magnificent temple, numerous rites, bleeding victims, and costly services. But that waxed old and has gone forever. Now no daily sacrifices, no ministering priesthood of Aaron's order. Its worshippers have been dispersed through every region of the globe. But this kingdom is fixed on a better basis, established by promises, and is destined to overthrow every other, until it shall comprehend within itself every nation, and people, and tongue.

Now there are connected with this kingdom several features which indicate its immoveability.

(1) Its moral glory. It cannot in this respect be exceeded except by the purity of heaven. We cannot have more holy precepts, example, or influences, &c.

(2) Its triumphs in past ages. It never will have more learning, talent, and power, arrayed against it; yet it stood and conquered. If so in the time of its infancy, what shall impair it during the period of its maturity and strength.

(3) Its universal adaptation to every country in the world. No other religion, or form of religion, is adapted to the whole earth. Judaism was not,—Mahomedanism is not;—nor any one form of Paganism. Christianity is alike at home everywhere. It suits the Arab in the desert,—the Hottentot in his kraal,—the philosopher in his study,—and the monarch on his throne. Like the light it is adapted to the world; like the air it is the breath of life to all human beings.

II. *We refer to the Reception of this Kingdom.*

Now this supposes the promulgation and offer of it. This is what is done when the gospel is preached. It announces, it offers to men the dominion and the blessings of his reign. It is in this way that it is to be extended to the end of time, and throughout the habitable earth. Now in receiving this kingdom,

1. We must relinquish the kingdom of Satan.

Cannot be identified with both. One light, the other darkness, &c. We abandon the one when we receive the other. We must come out and be separate. This is called a translation, passing from death unto life.

2. We must with faith cordially and humbly receive Christ and his administration.

The faith must be that of the heart, "If thou shalt believe with thine heart," &c. And the humility must be that of the child, "For except ye be converted and become as little children," &c. Look at the simplicity of spirit, the docility of mind, and humble tractableness of a little child. In that way we must receive the kingdom of God. Observe,

III. *The Duties arising therefrom.*

1. We must exhibit loyal obedience.

"Serve God,"—not ourselves, not the world, nor sin. These are to be forsaken. We must yield loyal obedience to Jesus, keep both his, and his Father's words. Act as becometh the subjects of his reign. Notice,

2. This obedience must be that which God prescribes and demands.

"Acceptable."

(1) According to his revealed word. Not will-worship, not acts of human fancy.

(2) In the way and spirit he requires.

(3) To the end he has appointed,—his own glory, and the honor of his grace.

3. This obedience must be connected with due homage and fear.

Not in a light and trifling spirit, not carelessly, but with holy feelings of profound respect and veneration; a proper fear of offending him; with just views of our littleness and sinfulness. To enable us to do this,

4. We must seek the aid of heavenly grace

"Let us have grace," guiding, support

ng, sanctifying grace. "Thy grace is sufficient," &c.

5. It is to be had at the throne of grace. It must be sought, cherished, and exercised; we must hold it fast; grow in grace, &c.

APPLICATION.

1. To the happy and dignified subjects of this kingdom, we say, cultivate a public generous spirit; seek its prosperity, peace, and glory.

2. Urge wretched sinners to receive it. It is come to you. Believe, and be saved.

3. Let us anticipate its final triumphs and universal diffusion.

"Jesus shall reign where'er the sun
Does his successive journeys run,
His kingdom stretch from shore to shore,
Till suns shall rise and set no more."

LXXXVII.—CHRIST'S SPIRITUAL BODY

"For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office," &c.—*Rom.* xii. 4, 5.

SCRIPTURAL views of the church of Christ would go far towards promoting a right state of mind in believers towards one another. Most persons acknowledge but one true church, but then all are eager to show that their own party forms that church, to the exclusion of all who do not walk with them, bear their name, and pronounce their peculiar sectarian shibboleth.

One of the great causes of this mistake arises from confounding uniformity with unity. The one we believe is not possible, the other is specifically enforced in the divine word. Our text may greatly aid us in comprehending the mind of God on this important and interesting subject.

I. *The Church of Christ is composed of many Members.*

II *The Members of Christ's Church are diversified in Character and Office.*

III. *The numerous and diversified Members of Christ form "one" Body.*

IV. *All the Members of Christ's Body are Members one of another.*

I. *The Church of Christ is composed of many Members.*

Now this is not contradictory of those passages which represent the flock of Christ as small, or the number of the righteous as few;—compared with the great mass they are so. But truly in the abstract they are many; were so in the apostles' time; are so now; many more than we know of: Elijah calculated wrongly. See 1 Kings xix. 8, 10. Bigotry often does so. The great completed family will be innumerable. No man shall number them. The seed of the Shiloh is to exceed the sands of the sea shore and the countless stars of heaven.

II. *The Members of Christ's Church are diversified in Character and Office.*

In the human body the variety and use of the various members is beautiful and wonderful. Some of these are less distinguished and less important, but all essential to the completion of the body. All have their distinctive functions, &c. One sees for the body, one speaks, one hears, one bears burdens, &c. Now in this way the church of Christ is constituted. Some minister, others teach, exhort, rule, &c. ver. 6–8. But let it be observed here that all the members have an office, all a part which is assigned by the great head and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

III. *The numerous and diversified Members of Christ form "one" Body.*

One member does not make a body, nor yet several, but all. The unity of the church is especially taught by the apostle, Eph. iv. 4, &c. Now this body of many members is one in the following parts.

(1) One common Father. Just as all human beings are the creatures of God, so all believers are the spiritual sons and daughters of God; "Our Father" is the common universal language of all the family of faith.

(2) One common nature. Just as the human species have only one human nature, however form or features may differ, so there is only one spiritual divine nature which all possess who have been born of God

(3) One pervading animating spirit. If so ye be, ye are the sons of God, the Spirit of God dwelleth in you. "If any man have not," &c. One spirit, but diversity of operations.

(4) One in vital union to Christ,—"In Christ." He is the great centre where all the lines of truth meet. The one foundation on which all rest. The one mediator in whom all trust. The one great head to whom all the members are united, influ

enced, directed and whom they love and obey.

(5) One in entire dependence upon divine grace. Without the Saviour we can do nothing. However intellectual, experienced, and talented, all and each are helpless without him.

IV. *All the Members of Christ's Body are Members one of another.*

However dissimilar in age, office, &c. All spiritual persons belong to one spiritual community, one building, one body. As such,

(1) They have mutual blessings. All heirs of the same covenant and promises. The same bread and water of life. Same benefits and privileges.

(2) They have mutual perils. The adversaries, snares, and dangers, are the same. The evils of the world, of the carnal mind, of the raging lion, &c.

(3) They have a mutual and common destination. All journeying to the same place which the Lord hath prepared, &c., shall walk the same streets, worship before the throne, join in the same songs, and enjoy the same bliss forever and ever.

(4) They are mutually dependent on each other in their way to this blissful destination. There can be no independence in the church of Christ. All depend on God, all dependent on each other; just as in the body, the eye sees for it, &c. The least is necessary and important, so the greatest; so the learned and the illiterate; the rich and the poor; the man of ten talents and the man of one.

APPLICATION.

1. Learn what constitutes a true Christian. Being a member of the body of Christ: believing we are united to Jesus and his people.

2. What necessity there is in the body for the individual members to exercise the spirit and graces of Christianity.

(1) Ought there not to be great forbearance? We ought not to expect from any, but that, which an imperfect Christian can present.

(2) Ought there not to be sympathy? It is so in the natural body,—if one part suffers, the whole nervous system feels.

(3) Ought there not to be love, and love embodied in active mutual aid? What man will not aid any weak or maimed member.

(4) Prayer. "Pray for one another, &c

LXXXVIII.—EARTHLY AND HEAVENLY DWELLINGS OF BELIEVERS

"For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens."—2 *Cor.* v. 1.

CONSIDERABLE doubt has been expressed by critics as to the meaning of the apostle in this passage. Some have contended he evidently intended to teach, that at death, believers had prepared for them a kind of vehicle, or vestment, in which the soul should dwell, until the resurrection of their bodies at the last day. We feel better satisfied with the general exposition of the text, as referring to the heavenly dwelling, into which at death the saints have a glorious happy reception. Observe then,

I. *The Christian's present Dwelling.*

II. *Their Future Residence.* And,

III. *The Influence which a Knowledge of this should have upon them.*

Observe,

I. *The Christian's present Residence.*

This is the body, figuratively styled the "earthly house of this tabernacle."

1. It is a house.

The residence of the soul. The dwelling for the immortal spirit. It is a most wondrous and beautiful structure. Fearfully and wonderfully made. Of which God was the all-skilful artificer. It is wisely adapted for the lofty tenant which occupies it.

2. It is an earthly house.

Originally made of red earth. Of the earth, earthy, &c. Formed of that which is material, in contradistinction to the spiritual character of the soul. The body is earthly, as its supplies are from the earth. Its foundations are in the dust. And it is destined to return to the earth from whence it originally proceeded. "Dust thou art," &c.

3. It is a moveable house or tabernacle.

Not a stable, fixed, abiding building. But calculated and adapted for removal from place to place. Like a shepherd's tent, now pitched here and then elsewhere

And as such it is destined to be taken down. At death it is unpinned. Then it is that it ceases to be the abode of its spiritual inhabitant. Now this taking down or dissolving of the tabernacle, is an event,

(1) Most certain. The living know that they must die. All, whether sinners or saints, &c. "I know that thou wilt bring me to death," &c. All the great and distinguished servants of God, who once dwelt on earth, and served God in their respective generations, have had their tabernacles dissolved. "The fathers, where are they," &c.

(2) It is an event most necessary. We must be dislodged from this earthly house, before we can inherit immortality and eternal life. "Flesh and blood cannot inherit," &c.

(3) It is an event demanding solemn thought and holy preparation. It is desirable that the tabernacle should be taken down in hope of a part in the first and blessed resurrection. But especially before the ejectment of the spirit, that we should have a clear and satisfactory prospect of a better residence in the heavenly state. This leads us to consider,

II. *The Christian's future Residence.*

Now this residence is clearly that of God's glorious kingdom and presence above. The saint's future residence,

1. Is a building.

As such it is likened to a glorious city. The new Jerusalem. The heavenly temple. This is the place spoken of by Jesus, "My Father's house." Palace of God. Imperial residence of Deity. As such it will be worthy of his greatness, and majesty, and glory. As such it will be capacious,—resplendently beautiful, sublimely magnificent.

2. Building of God

His own residence. Full of his glory. Building which God has designed to be the residence of holy beings.

3. Not made with hands.

Not formed as God made the human body.

4 A celestial building.

In the heavens. Not having its foundations on this mutable decaying earth. But in the highest and most glorious part of God's universe. The highest heavens. Heaven of heavens.

5. An eternal building.

The body is fragile, dying; will be consigned to the earth. But the heavenly building, like its founder and maker, is "eternal." Unaffected by change. Eternity is engraven upon the walls of that building. Its foundations are immoveable. Death is unknown. Immortality is the atmosphere of heaven. The tree of paradise is the tree of life. endless life. The river which flows from before the throne, is the river of life. Heaven in its enjoyments is "eternal life." Let us notice,

III. *The Influence which a Knowledge of this should produce.*

The apostle expresses the knowledge which believers have of this "We know," &c. From God's own infallible record from the inviolable promises of his word, they know with blessed and certain assurance, the certainty of that glorious state of felicity, which he has in reversion for all his saints.

1. This knowledge should wean the mind from love of the world.

They should consider themselves but strangers and pilgrims here, &c. Knowing that time is short, we should buy and sell, and weep and rejoice, &c. as remembering that the fashion of this world passeth away.

2. We should habitually live in a state of preparedness for death.

Our bodies are journeying to the grave. These tabernacles must be dissolved. Then let us wisely consider this, and live as those who know that they must die. "Be ye therefore ready," &c. The event is certain—the time unknown.

3. We should cherish joyful hope as to the future.

The Christian has a good hope. His best state is future. He is an heir of glory. He has a house on high,—a building in glory. His body too shall be raised again; raised in beauty,—in health,—in vigor,—in immortality. O blessed hope O rapturous prospect! Meditate and cherish those feelings this subject is calculated to inspire.

We would remind the ungodly of that fearful state to which their sins and impurity of nature are evidently exposing them When their earthly tabernacle is dissolved, there will be no habitation to receive them but the dark, hopeless regions of death, the prison of hell, and everlasting weeping and gnashing of teeth. O fear, tremble, repent and seek mercy.

LXXXIX.—HEAVEN LIKENED TO A FAMILY.

"The whole family in heaven."—*Eph.* iii. 15

THE Christian is a traveller on his way to Zion. This is not his rest. The traveller oftentimes directs his attention to the end of his journey, to the city of his habitation. The mariner often casts a look of hope over the waters which separate him from the desired haven. The prince who is the crown heir, often anticipates the riches and magnificence he will possess when he arrives at age. Now the Christian is a traveller passing through this desert world to the city of the new Jerusalem: and he often sings,

"Jerusalem my happy home,
Name ever dear to me,
When shall my journey have its end,
When shall I come to thee?"

The Christian is a tempest-tossed mariner, sailing to the celestial haven, and often does he long to behold the quiet shores of the heavenly world. The Christian is a child of God, and an heir of glory, and he looks forward when he shall receive from he hands of the chief shepherd the crown of life, &c. Our subject leads us to the contemplation of the heavenly family. Now let us notice,

I. *The Members of the Heavenly Family.*

1. There is the supreme head of the family

Jehovah, the universal Father of the spirits of all flesh. The Father and origin of all beings. So called in reference to Jesus. Angels too are his sons—believers his adopted children—the human family his intelligent offspring—all animated beings his creatures.

2. There is the elder brother, the mediator between God and man.

Jesus stands midway between essential Deity and creature man, closely and inseparably allied to each. He has the essential nature and perfections of the Father. "He and the Father are one." He had absolute glory with him before the world was. Then he has, in connection with the divine nature, the nature of man. He was "made of a woman," &c. "God manifest in the flesh." Now he is the light and glory of heaven. The sun of the heavenly temple. The tree of life, &c

3. There is an innumerable company of angels.

Now these are called "morning stars," "sons of God," "Jehovah's host," "his ministering servants." It is said of them that their number is "ten thousand times ten thousand, yea, thousands of thousands." Now all these are clad in habiliments of unspotted purity, and from their zeal and benevolence, are likened to flames of fire.

4. There will be a countless number of glorified children.

The old monstrous doctrine of the reprobation and eternal perdition of infants is now nearly exploded from the world. Of the felicity of all who die in childhood there can be no doubt. The Father of mercies cannot rejoice in their destruction. Besides, Jesus said with great complacency and delight, "Suffer," &c.

5. There will be the whole collected body of believers.

Now this will of course include the truly pious, (1) Of all ages. From Abel downwards to Noah. Noah to Moses,—Moses to David,—David to Christ,—from the Baptist to Stephen,—Stephen to Constantine:—from thence to the reformation and to our own day. (2) Of all countries "They shall come from the east," &c Of every clime and tongue, color and people. Of all these only one grand essential:—a living, purifying, and obedient faith; for every believer shall be saved, &c.

II. *The Unity of the Heavenly Family.*

The "whole family." Observe,

1. There is one family house.

On earth this cannot be. Diversity of sentiment and worship render it desirable, that in separate companies we should go up to the heavenly Zion. Besides, no house on earth could hold the congregation of the faithful. But there is a house not made with hands, &c. Jesus said, "In my Father's house," &c. This unity is ever kept prominent. Kingdom,—inheritance,—city,—temple.

2. All of this family have the same employments.

Worship God and the Lamb. His servants shall serve him, &c.

3. All have the same enjoyments.

They see God. Enjoy God. The Lamb leads them to living fountains of water, &c. Same rest. Same sources of joy. "In thy presence," &c.

III. *The glorious Characteristics of the Heavenly Family.*

1. Absolute purity

Not one spot, or one infirmity. Not one selfish or envious or angry member.

2. Perfect blessedness.

Nothing that disturbs or grieves. No enemies without. No fears within. No darkness of mind. No sin, or pain, or disease. The eye weeps not, the heart aches not. There is,

3. Glorious permanency.

Immutability is engraved upon the walls and pavement of the celestial city. The church of God on earth is like a vessel on the waters tossed hither and thither. There are removals to other churches; apostasies from the truth; the scythe of death: the king of terrors visits the sanctuary, and one and another he marks as his victims. None of these in the family above.

IMPROVEMENT.

1. Have we not all some friends and kindred who form part of the family in heaven?

2. Are we living and acting so as to get there ourselves?

3. Invite sinners.

XC.—CHRIST THE SUBSTANCE OF TYPES AND METAPHORS.

"But the body is of Christ."—*Col.* ii. 17

THE apostle had been treating of Jewish ceremonies and festivals, and these he describes as being "a shadow of things to come." Only designed to prefigure some approaching event or blessing. Not possessing any real intrinsic value, but instituted to lead the pious, believing mind to look forward for that which was thus symbolized. The apostle then exhibits the whole of these shadows as terminating in the Saviour. "But the body is of Christ," or, as some versions read, "The body is Christ." It does not however follow that we are to look for the substance of all the ceremonies in the person of Christ, or even in his work, or benefits. Many of the ceremonial institutions pointed to the economy of the gospel; to the ordinances of Christianity; and to the mystical body of his church. Yet Jesus being the foundation, the sum and substance, the Alpha and Omega, of the Christian religion, it is not difficult to perceive with what propriety the apostle says, "The body (or substance) is of Christ." Observe then by way of concise recapitulation,

I. *That Christ is the Body or Substance of the Personal Types.*

Adam, the Father of the human race, was a figure or type of him that was to come,—even the father of the world to come. Noah, in his name, life ministry as the deliverer of his family, and the founder of a new world, exhibited Jesus, the preacher of righteousness, and the deliverer from the wrath to come. Thus, too Melchisedec was a distinguished type of the kingly and priestly offices which Jesus should sustain. Isaac evidently typified the beloved Son of God, who was really and truly offered for the sin of the world. In many things we behold a beautiful similarity in the interesting events of Joseph's life, and those of the world's Redeemer. Moses was confessedly a personal type of the world's great teacher and deliverer. Joshua, who led Israel as the captain of God's host to the goodly land, was a type of that still more distinguished person, who was given to be a leader and commander to the people. The exploits of Samson evidently referred to some of the greatest of Christ's achievements. David in many things acted a typical part, and shadowed forth the truly beloved of God and his people. In Solomon we have several striking traits which were only exhibited, in all their fulness and lustre, in Solomon's Lord and Saviour. Jonah, the wayward prophet, with all his weakness, was a sign of the death and resurrection of Jesus. The substance of all these typical excellencies is Christ.

II. *Christ is the Body or Substance of many Scriptural typical Things and Events.*

He is the true ladder, or way of communication between heaven and earth. He is the real paschal lamb, our passover sacrificed for us. He was typified by the rock smitten for the supply of Israel's congregation with water in the desert. He is the manna from heaven, the true bread of life. He is the substance, both of the goat that was dismissed into the wilderness, as well as the goat that was slain, "for he bare our iniquities," and "died for our sins." As the brazen serpent was the medium of healing to the wounded Israelites, so Jesus is the great evidence of God's love to the world, and the medium of life to all believers. He is the ark of God's

covenant, embodying his law, and the mercy-seat, or propitiatory, by whom we have access to God, and obtain forgiveness of sin. He is the great high-priest, having our nature, ever living to make intercession for us. He is our sure and accessible refuge, by whom we are saved from the wrath to come.

III. *Christ in his Church and Gospel was typified by many of the Institutions and Services of the Levitical Dispensation.*

His church was symbolically set forth in the bush enveloped in flame, yet unconsumed; in the priesthood under the law, seeing his spiritual people are a "royal priesthood;" in the tabernacle, which was preparatory to the erection of the temple of Solomon; in Jerusalem, which typified the Jerusalem from above, the mother of all believers; in the Jewish nation, which shadowed forth the separated character and glorious privileges of the church of Jesus. The gospel of Christ was evidently typified in many of the festivals of the Jewish religion, especially in the year of jubilee, to which the Redeemer alluded, as the "acceptable year of the Lord." But we observe,

IV. *All Types and Metaphors but feebly shadowed forth the Glories and Excellencies of Jesus.*

> "All are too mean to set him forth,
> Too mean to show the Saviour's worth"

It will be needful that we select all that was holy and eminent from all the personal types, and concentrate them, as in one, to judge rightly of Jesus. Then his excellencies and perfections, his work and benefits, are only feebly presented before us. He is the infinitely holy and absolutely perfect Son of God. In him dwelt all the fulness of the godhead, bodily. He is the glory of heaven, the object of angelic worship and praise, the joy of redeemed spirits, and the light of eternity. He is the sun of the universe, the life of the world, and supreme Lord of all. Then how we should study his character, meditate on his glories, be solicitous of his favor, and joyfully anticipate the vision of his glorious face, in the heavenly temple. In the divine oracles every thing is full of Christ. We find him as the golden thread in its eventful histories. We find him as the perfection, the substance, and end, of its holy biography. We behold him as the beauty and significancy of its rites and institutions. He is the theme of holy song. The subject of constant prophecy. The riches of all the precious promises. The peerless pearl of the field of revelation. Finding him, we are rich for both worlds. Possessing him, "all things are ours." Joint heirs with Christ, and we are thus "heirs of God," and of all the glories of the world to come.

XCI.—CHRIST CRUCIFIED.

For I determined not to know any thing among you save Jesus Christ, and him crucified."—1 *Cor* ii. 2.

This is Paul's noble avowal to the church of Christ at Corinth. The occasion of it is to be found in the declining of that church from the purity and simplicity of the gospel. After Christianity had been established there for some time, they became ambitious of gifts and miraculous powers. In addition to this, they divided themselves into respective parties, and some said they were of Paul, others of Apollos, &c. In this way they became unsettled, and exhibited a most unhappy and unsightly appearance to the other churches of Christ. Paul endeavors in this epistle to show them the evil of such a course, and that Paul, Apollos, or Cephas, were only servants of the one Lord Jesus Christ. And it was on this account that he thanked God he had baptized so few of them. See i. 14, &c. He also shows them that he never attempted to gain any improper influence over them; his sole design being to preach Christ, and him crucified, &c. So also in the text, "For I determined," &c.

I. *The Subject of Paul's Declaration.*

"Christ and him crucified." Now this accords with what he affirmed to the Galatians, "God forbid," &c. Christ crucified is the great theme of the Christian ministry. Now this will be evident if you observe that,

1. This is the great end of all revelation

The types and sacrifices of the ancient economy all referred to this. So did the prophecies; they testified beforehand of the sufferings of Christ, &c. Jesus declared the certainty and character of his death. "The Son of Man must be delivered," &c. "Thus it was written, and thus it behooved," &c. This is the sum

of the gospel testimony, &c., that "Christ died for our sins," &c.

2. Here alone is exhibited the infinite love and mercy of God.

Here we see how much God hated sin, and yet loved the sinner, &c. "Greater love hath no man than this," &c. How great the gift!—how vast the price! Who can compute it? Contrast heaven and earth,—glory and infamy,—the throne of the eternal, and the cross of Calvary.

3. Here only has the sinner life and salvation.

Where can the sinner go but to the cross? There is the sentence against sin. Sin punished. The surety dying. The blood of redemption flowing. There is the fountain opened for sin, &c. "See there my Lord upon the tree," &c. Before the cross we are humbled, made contrite, and drawn to love the Redeemer. "We love him," &c. Here then is the ground, the immoveable ground of our hope, &c. "As Moses lifted up," &c.

II. *The Nature of his Declaration.*

1. It intimated that nothing pertaining to himself should have the place of the cross.

The human mind is capable of being influenced by a variety of principles and feelings. But all the ordinary things so highly esteemed by men in general, the apostle sacrificed in preaching Christ crucified. *Mental dignity* had to be sacrificed. The Jews who had the oracles, stumbled at the cross. To the Greeks it was foolishness, and the preachers of the gospel were deemed fools by all. One said, "Much learning hath," &c. Well, says the apostle, be it so, call me idiot or madman, "For whether we be beside ourselves, it is to God, or whether we be sober, it is for your cause," &c. Nothing was so offensive to the learned as salvation by the crucifixion of a reputed malefactor. Yet, says Paul, "I am determined," &c. The approbation of friends, the associates of his youth, had to be sacrificed. His chosen friends. His own countrymen. Yes, to elevate the cross was to excite all their scorn their hatred, malevolence. His name would be ranked with apostates, and his character associated with the base, the refuse of the world. What a sacrifice! Yet in spite of all this, he resolved to know nothing, &c.

The ease and affluence of life had to be sacrificed. The cross exposed him to the loss of all earthly good. In preaching Christ, he had to endure hunger, and weariness, and pain; perils by land and by sea; the loss of all earthly riches, and the possession of all poverty; the loss of liberty; yea, and life itself was in jeopardy every hour. Nevertheless, he said, "he was determined," &c. He preferred Christ to all things, and was resolved to preach him, whatever might be the cost. His determination included,

2. To preach nothing that was contrary to Christ crucified.

Hence he had to denounce human merit, the ancient sacrifices, the works of the law, and all systems of religion then in existence. The cross knew of no compromising. No mixture. It was to overthrow all creeds and forms; and these, however ancient, popular, and powerfully patronized and supported. Paul knew this, yet he "was determined," &c.

3. To make Christ crucified the grand centre of all other truths which he might proclaim.

Such as the goodness of God,—the truth of God,—the holiness, and the mercy of God,—the recovery of man from sin and ruin,—the hope of man. All doctrines in reference to this,—all duties,—all blessings, and privileges in reference to this. All that Christ did, and taught, and wrought out. Incarnation,—humiliation,—preaching,—miracles, &c.

4. To proclaim Christ crucified in all places, at all times, and to all persons.

This was his theme everywhere—at Corinth, Athens, Rome; the theme by which he began his ministry, with which he carried it on, and which he manifested to its termination. To the rich and the poor; to the wise and the illiterate; to the young and the old; to every man he made known Christ and him crucified. Consider,

III. *The Reasons by which this Declaration may be Justified.*

1. This was the design of his office.

As Christ's ambassador; Christ's witness. It was his business. His great work. He was called, &c. to this. Not to acquire languages; to examine the productions of nature; or the effects of science. Not to visit ancient monuments,—inquire after antiquities, &c. Not to collect manuscripts and visit the seats of learning. No, but to lift up the cross,—to say everywhere,

" 'Tis all my business here below,
To cry, Behold the Lamb."

2. This alone would prove saving to souls.

This to all believers is the power of God, and this the wisdom of God. Here is pardon, peace, and holiness for every sinner, and nowhere else.

3. This alone would glorify Christ.

" If I be lifted up," &c. He endured the pain and the curse &c. that he might see his seed, and witness the travail of his soul, and be satisfied. In this way Christ's kingdom is to be extended, and the world to be subdued to his authority and will.

APPLICATION.

1. This subject is the basis of hope to the sinner.

2. The ground of triumph to believers.

3. And the joy of heaven forever

APPENDIX

SERMONS ON SPECIAL OCCASIONS

I.—THE NATURE OF ACCEPTABLE WORSHIP.

FOR OPENINGS AND ANNIVERSARIES OF CHAPELS.

"God is a spirit; and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth."—*John* iv 24.

THE text is a part of the conversation which Jesus had with the Samaritan woman. This conversation related to the place of public worship, the Samaritans contending that they ought to worship God in mount Gerizim, a little way from Sychar, while the Jews demanded that Jehovah should alone be worshipped in the temple at Jerusalem, which had been expressly erected by his command, and for his glory. Jesus having admonished the woman of the darkness of their worship, and that the Jews were right in this controversy, he then observes, that the period of the new dispensation had arrived, when all material buildings and local places would be of no avail with God; that the spiritual reign of the Messiah was commencing, when God could only be acceptably worshipped by those who worshipped him in spirit and in truth. Our subject is the nature of acceptable worship.

I. *Let us offer some general remarks on public worship.*

II. *Show the nature and importance of the direction given in the text.*

I. *Let us offer some general remarks on public worship.*

1. All places are alike acceptable with God.

Once Jerusalem was the city of Jewish ordinances and festivals. Since then God has given no such distinctions. Judaism was the national religion, and Jerusalem the metropolis. Christianity is a religion for the world, and every part is hallowed ground to the true worshipper of the living God. The mountain-top, the deep glen, the secluded grove, the dreary desert, or the bosom of the ocean, are alike with God. The cathedral or the chapel, the room, the barn or the house, are alike, and equally consecrated by scriptural and spiritual worship. "Wherever two or three," &c.

2. Public worship should be conducted according to the word of God.

It is not what men may deem instructive or impressive, but it is what is clearly found in the word of God. This we have in two forms—positive direction, and clear precedents. Now it will easily be seen that the public worship of the New Testament comprises the reading of the scriptures, preaching the gospel, singing hymns or psalms, public prayer, and fellowship in the holy supper. See Acts ii. 41.

Now these are the only public ordinances we read of in the New Testament as connected with the believing baptized followers of Jesus Christ. All more than these is will-worship, neither pleasing to God, nor useful to the worshipper.

3. Public worship is the duty and privilege of all believers.

Without it God would have no monument to his grace in the world. No visible church. No visible army. No visible family. Without it Christians would have no fellowship, and the ordinances would sink speedily into oblivion. Without it there would be no profession of Christ before men. But imperative as the duty is, the privilege, &c., is still greater. To be allowed to have interviews with God, to have audience with the King of kings. To go to his holy place, and bend before his glorious throne, and in his sacred presence. We may well exclaim, Will God indeed dwell with man, will the high and lofty one condescend to behold what is done upon the earth? O yes, God has said, "To that man will I look," &c.

4. Public worship requires due preparation, and right feelings in entering upon it.

Preparation is always requisite before we enter upon any thing of great importance. The student before his examination. The orator before his address The subject before he attends the levee

of his sovereign. How much more here. If possible, services of the Saturday evening should have reference to it. Always the devotions of the Lord's day morning. Watchfulness and prayer in our way to the sanctuary. Serious self-examination as to our motives and feelings. Conversation and reading should be of a spiritual character.

5. Public worship should be constant and regular.

(1) Constant as to the occasions of worship. Not once a day; not mere fair-weather worshippers.

(2) Regular as to time. Allow me to refer to the most common, notorious evil of late attendance. Many apologies, most of them exceedingly weak. Great toil on the preceding day. Family cares, &c. Would these prevent attention to your worldly business? No; the very person who speaks of toil, rises early six days, but cannot attend at eleven o'clock to worship God. Now, late attendance manifests lukewarmness of heart. It is a breach of the common rules of decency. It is injurious to others, and prevents them enjoying the services of God's house. Such can only render a maimed sacrifice to God. A little care and resolution would prevent this great evil.

> "Lord, how delightful 'tis to see
> A *whole* assembly worship thee:
> At once they sing, at once they pray,
> They hear of heaven and learn the way."

6. Public worship should be followed by reflection and prayer.

The instructions must be treasured up. The emotions must be cherished. The seed received must be watered by our fervent prayers. All gossiping and idle conversation must be avoided, or Satan will easily steal away the seed out of our hearts. In this way only can our worship prove eminently useful. But we must now show,

II. *The nature and importance of the directions contained in the text.*

"God is a spirit," &c. That is, he is not a corporeal being, therefore not confined to any locality, &c.

1 God is a spirit, therefore he requires the worship of the mind.

The body may be brought before God, while the soul is far from his house and his service. God demands the soul, the intellect, the spiritual part of man The tongue, the eye, the ear, will not please God, without the understanding, the judgment, the will, the affections, &c. "For God is a spirit," &c.

2. God is an invisible spirit, and therefore he must be worshipped in the spirit of faith.

"We walk by faith, and not by sight." The Jews had the cloud of the divine presence. We have his solemn word of promise, 'Wherever two or three are met together in my name," &c. Now faith must realize this and act upon it.

3. God is a great and glorious spirit, and therefore we must worship him in the spirit of reverence and fear.

"God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of his saints," &c. Ps. lxxxix. 1. See Isaiah viii. 13, "Sanctify the Lord of Hosts himself, and let him be your fear, and let him be your dread."

4. God is a holy spirit, therefore we must worship him with contrition and prayer.

"O come, let us worship and bow down, and kneel before the Lord," &c. Ps. xcv. 6, &c. Should we not feel and pray, "Lord, enter not into judgment," &c.

5. God is a merciful and gracious spirit, and therefore we should worship him in the spirit of confidence and hope.

"Let us come boldly," &c. "Having therefore boldness to enter," &c.

6. God is a spirit of infinite benevolence and love, and therefore we should worship him in the spirit of affection and delight.

"Lord, I have loved," &c. "How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of Hosts." "One thing have I desired of the Lord, and that will I seek after," &c.

7. God is an omniscient spirit, and therefore we must worship him in sincerity and truth.

"Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts," &c., Ps. li. 6. "O Lord, thou hast searched me and known me," &c., Ps. cxxxix. 1–6.

APPLICATION.

1. Remember your constant unworthiness and need. Therefore draw nigh to God with reverence, lowliness, and godly fear.

2. Christ's preciousness and merit. And in the exercise of confidence approach his footstool.

3. And the Spirit's willingness to aid you if you seek his influences.

II.—MESSIAH'S FINAL TRIUMPH.

"I will overturn, overturn, overturn it; and it shall be no more, until he come whose right it is; and I will give it him."—*Ezek.* xxi. 27.

THE prophecy of the text has reference to the removal of the crown from the head of Zedekiah, and the vacancy in the royal line of David, which should not be filled up until the sceptre should be given into Christ's hands, whose true right it should be to reign. Now, all this was literally fulfilled, for the kingdom of Judah ceased not until Christ appeared, who was the root and offspring of David, and King of kings, and Lord of lords. But there is another version of the text which may be taken, and which is in perfect unison with the spirit of prophecy,—that Jehovah has given universal empire to Jesus, that it is Christ's right to reign, and that God will overturn every obstacle and impediment until it be accomplished. Let these three topics, then, now engage our attention.

I. *Jehovah has given universal empire to Jesus.*

A few citations from the oracles of truth will establish this. Ps. lxxii. 8–11, ii. 8, lxxxix. 27; Dan. vii. 14; Zech. ix. 10; Phil. ii. 10; Acts ii. 32, &c. It is evident from these truths that Christ's dominion is to embrace the whole world,—every empire, kingdom, continent, and island. All people of every language, and color, and tongue. His kingdom is to swallow up every other; and the kingdom that will not serve him is to utterly perish. This blissful consummation was beheld in prophetic vision by John, Rev. xi. 15. With this state of things will be associated universal righteousness, universal knowledge, universal peace, universal bliss. We notice,

II. *That it is Christ's right thus to reign.*

"Whose right it is." Now, this right of Jesus to reign supremely and universally is founded,

1. On his creative property in all things. The apostle says, Col. i. 16, "All things were made by him, and for him." By his power, and for his glory. Satan is an usurper,—the world is alienated from its rightful Lord. But the right of Christ remains unaffected, and that right he will demand and obtain.

2. On his supreme authority as universal Lord.

He is Lord of all, King of kings, &c. His majesty and glory fill the heavens His claims are as great as the universe. As such, he has a right surely to the earth —to the whole earth. This authority is seen in controlling all events, in upholding all things, &c. In his infinite out-goings of benevolence and love.

3. He has a redeeming right.

He became incarnate, he descended into it, he brought the light of heaven into it, he gave his own life for it, he is the proprietor, &c. Here then is a right, ratified with his precious blood. And he redeemed it expressly that he might reign over it. That he might be King, and King alone, that the diadem might encircle his own brow. And thus in the extension of his kingdom he is receiving his joy and reward. He was willingly lifted up that he "might draw all men unto him."

III. *God will overturn every obstacle until this be effected.*

"I will overturn," &c. Now, in effecting this glorious purpose the works of the devil must be destroyed, and the empire of sin totally overthrown. Ignorance must give place to light, error to truth, sin to holiness. Satan must be driven from his strongholds, and thus Jesus will enlarge his empire, and extend his domains. There are, however, four mighty impediments, which must be overthrown, entirely overturned.

1. Paganism, and all its multifarious rites.

The idolatry of paganism, the superstitions of paganism, the cruelty of paganism. The very atmosphere of paganism is the smoke of the bottomless pit. Paganism, whether of the intellectual and metaphysical kind of the Hindoos, or of the rude and illiterate kind of the untutored tribes, must be overturned. Every pagan idol must be cast to the moles and the bats, &c. Every altar razed, and every temple desolated. Isa. ii. 18.

2. Mahommedanism in all its earthly gratifications.

Mahommedanism is a splendid admixture of adulterated truth and vulgar error

Now this must be overturned. The false prophet must be denounced and forsaken, the crescent must wane and retire into oblivion before the power of the cross.

3. Judaism with its obsolete rites.

A system originally of God, but which consisted of types and shadows, which have long ago been ratified in Jesus, the great substitute and antitype. Eighteen hundred years ago that system lost its vitality; and Ichabod has been for ages written upon its rites, and services, and people,—the glory has departed. The Jews are like persons who at eventide are looking for the rising of the sun; but every vestige of that shadowy economy must pass away, and all the relics of the scattered tribes be collected into the fold of the Nazarene, Rom. xi. 25.

4. Antichristian Rome.

The papal hierarchy is evidently that man of sin to which the apostle alludes, who must be destroyed. This is evidently the mystical Babylon whose overthrow is certain. This is to be as a millstone thrown into the depths of the sea, Rev. xviii. 20. Every thing that exalteth itself against God, or attempts the division of Christ's merits, must be consumed before the brightness of Messiah's countenance, and the power of his truth. But you ask, How will God overturn, &c.? Doubtless his providence will subserve the purposes of his grace. He may cause science and commerce to open a passage for the message of truth. He may even overrule war, and may allow the military hero to pioneer the ambassador of peace. But he will do it by the power of the gospel of truth. The doctrines of the cross are to effect it. "We preach Christ crucified," &c. "Not by might, nor by power," &c. The spiritual sword is the word of God. He did this by the gospel in primitive times. In bigoted Jerusalem, in idolatrous Athens, in lascivious Corinth, in imperial Rome, and in these, then rude islands of the sea. He is doing so now. Look at the islands of the South Sea, look at Central Africa, look on the shores of continental India, look into the interior of Burmah; in one word, that which converts a blaspheming Briton will save a Hindoo idolater, or savage American Indian.

APPLICATION.

1. Are your sympathies and affections on the side of Jesus? Does the subject inspire, inspirit you? Has it your affections, prayers, influence, and help?

2. How necessary is devoted, concentrated effort. What has to be achieved make the calculation. We spoke of Pagans, write down 482 millions; Mahommedans, 140 millions; Jews, 3 millions; then add, as disciples of Papal Rome, 80 millions; total, 705 millions. Is it not hopeless? No,—read the text. God has spoken it.

3. Secure a personal interest in the gracious administration of Jesus.

III.—THE DUTY OF CHURCHES TO THEIR PASTORS

DELIVERED AT AN ORDINATION SERVICE AT [illegible]-ON-TRENT, SEPT. 9, 1840.

"Now if Timotheus come, see that he may be with you without fear; for he worketh the work of the Lord, as I also do."—1 *Cor.* xvi. 10

The word of God is a perfect rule of faith and practice. It is not only profitable for doctrine, and reproof, and correction, but for perfect instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be thoroughly furnished unto all good works. Every station and office has its corresponding duties. For instance, there are parental, which devolve upon parents; and filial, upon children. There are pastoral duties, which devolve upon ministers of Jesus Christ; to these our dear brother has been this day fully and specifically directed; but there are also necessary corresponding duties which devolve upon Christian churches. To call your attention particularly to these is the object of the present occasion. Numerous are the passages which present this subject before you. In writing to the Hebrews, the apostle says, "Obey them that have the rule over you," &c. Heb. xiii. 17. To the Philippians the same apostle says, "Receive him therefore in the Lord with all gladness; and hold such in reputation." And to the Thessalonians he is still more explicit: "And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labor among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you," &c. The same spirit and design is evidently expressed in reference to Timothy in the text. When he wrote to them and said, "See that he be with you without fear," &c. In the text we have

I. *A reference to the nature and design of the ministerial office.*

"He worketh the work of," &c.

II. *The obvious duty of the church to see that such are with them without fear.*

I. *A reference to the nature and design of the ministerial office.*

"He worketh the work of the Lord." The Christian minister is called to his office by the Lord. He is qualified by the Lord. He is employed in doing the Lord's work. The means and instrumentality of doing it are laid down by the Lord. His great object is to glorify the Lord, and diffuse abroad the true knowledge and glory of God. His success is from the Lord, and his final reward the Lord the righteous judge confers upon him. These important topics we must pass over, but we briefly call your attention to three views of his work.

1. It is solemn.

It is work connected with mind, and with spirit; with the undying souls of men. It is work which comprises, within its own legitimate sphere, all that is momentous in time and eternity. It is inseparably connected with the eternal glory or the everlasting misery of our fellow beings.

2. It is arduous.

It is work which requires the outlay of the whole man,—all the energies of the body,—all the capacities of the mind,—and all the emotions of the spirit. It is arduous from the lofty sublimity of its theme,—from the array of its opponents with whom it has to contend. It is arduous as it requires all the devotion of time, means, energies, and resources which the most highly favored human being may possess. A Christian minister must devote all he has to God and the requirements of his office. It is a work pertaining to every day, every season, and every place where he lives or moves. Well might the apostle exclaim, "Who is sufficient for these things?"

3. It is responsible.

The Christian minister is but a servant or steward, and he must surrender a clear, minute, and complete account of himself and work to God. God will reckon with him, and reward or condemn, according to the employment of talents he has had committed to his trust. That responsibility is connected with the eternal destiny of those under his charge. The blood of souls, if he should be faithless, will be required at his hands. Such is the office and work of the Christian minister. Consider then,

II. *The obvious duty of the church with respect to him.*

He is to be with you without fear. In order to this,

1. Supply his pecuniary need, and let him not fear as to his temporal support.

If he is fully engaged in providing for you spiritual things, how reasonable that you should supply him with needful temporal things. I do not state the amount,—to judge of this I must again refer you to his responsibility. A writer in the "Times," recently referred to the paltry sum of six or seven shillings per day being given to men who conduct the engines on the railways of our country; and observed, that a sum three times that amount should be given to those to whom the care of human life is committed. But surely the charge and care of souls is vastly more momentous, and deserving of much higher remuneration. But on this point two principles should decide; the necessities of your pastor, and the ability you possess. If you cannot remunerate him adequately, you must do all you can; and this he has an equitable right to expect. Let this be done respectfully, with great courtesy, and in the spirit of promptitude and love.

2. Give him your confidential and affectionate countenance, and let him be without fear as to the position he occupies in your esteem.

Show him that he has favor in your eyes; that he is planted deeply in your regards; that you receive him as from God, and honor, and love him as such.

3. Be regular in your attendance on the means of grace, and let him not fear the acceptance of his ministry among you.

This he has a right to expect. If he must study and preach, it is yours to be present, and hear what has been prepared for you. Be not guilty of religious vagrancy, and telling the world of the poverty of your own homes, by being found seeking a morsel here and everywhere. "Forsake not the assembling of yourselves together," &c.

4. Unite with him in every holy enterprise, and let him not fear desertion in his efforts to do good.

He may do a little single-handed. So did Moses during Israel's engagement with

Amalek. But he may, like Moses, fail, unless you are near him, and with him, to encourage his heart and hold up his hands. I trust it will be said of him, "And there went with him a chosen band," &c.

5. Pray fervently and continually for him, and let him not fear devotional neglect.

How anxious Paul was for this, "Brethren, pray for us," &c. Do this in your closet, in your families, as well as in the social meetings of the church.

6. Exhibit the holy fruit of his labors, and let him not fear losing his reward in the great day.

See Phil. iv. 1; 1 Cor. iii. 13, &c. Live his sermons. See that the ends of preaching, and ordinances, and pastoral duties, are answered in your holy lives. Be living epistles, &c. Be the joy of his heart by your holy fruitfulness, and good works, and Christ-like spirit.

Let me conclude, by just naming a few motives why he should be with you without fear.

(1) His own comfort.

If he is with you in fear he cannot be happy. He will be your slave; his sufferings will be excruciating in the extreme. Would you have him happy and cheerful, "then see," &c.

(2) Your own profit.

He cannot do you good without having your confidence, affection, and esteem. Otherwise, he will be paralyzed. You will not seek to be profited in vain.

(3) The church's welfare.

A happy comfortable pastor is indispensable. Without it, the church will have no attractions to those without, and no joy for those within. If you are to have peace within your walls, you must have a happy pastor. Then see to it, &c.

(4) Your accountableness to God.

God will require you to answer for your treatment of our brother. Act as in God's sight, and for his glory, so that you may meet him in the presence of the Lord Jesus with exceeding great joy. "And now, may the Lord God of your fathers bless you," &c.

IV.—A DISCOURSE TO CHILDREN

"I love them that love me; and those that seek me early shall find me"—*Prov* viii. 17

My young hearers will perceive that our text is represented as being the language of Wisdom. See ver. 12. Now it is generally agreed that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and Redeemer of the world, is here described by the term Wisdom. This is clearly established by the truths contained in the twenty-second to the thirty-first verse. As such, then, we will now consider it. But what does Jesus say? He addresses two kinds of children. 1. Those who love him. 2. Those who seek him; and he promises gracious things to both of them. "I love them," &c. "Those that seek me early shall," &c. Now, we will consider these characters separately. And we inquire,

I. *What is it to love Christ?*

You all know what love signifies. You can tell the difference between that and dislike,—between that and indifference. I place three persons before you: one whose character is very bad; he is said to hate and be cruel to children; his countenance is very dark, and he has some deadly weapon in his hand. Why, if you knew all this you would not wish to be near him; you would feel dislike to him and dread him. Well, there is a second, and he is a stranger, you never heard either good or evil of him, never saw him before,—why, you would feel indifferent to him, you would not however feel towards him as to the other. Well, now, your father or mother, or some very kind friend draws near, oh, how differently you now feel; you do not dislike, neither are you indifferent. Your heart loves this person Now, to love is to esteem, to value, to approve of, and to delight in the person beloved. Do you thus love God? Do you often think of God? Do you often speak to God in prayer? Do you try to obey God? Do you fear to grieve God? Do you love his day, his house, his people, his word? I am sure you ought to love him; for he made you, gave you life, gave you all your senses, all your faculties; gave you kind parents, health,—all things. You have nothing but what he gives you. He gave you himself, he came from heaven to show his love, and to die for you: and he did die, even on the cross, for you children's salvation. He has sent you the blessed Bible, and he tells you there that he has prepared heaven for all pious children when they die. Besides, he says

he loves them," &c. You rejoice because your parents love you; but how much better that God loves you. He can help you when they cannot; he never dies, but your parents die. He will guide you, keep you, bless you, and make you happy forever and ever.

II. *What he says to those who seek him.*

But let me just ask two or three questions here.

1. Are some children living far from him—living without him?

Oh yes! we grieve to say that many are wandering by sin far from God. All who do wickedly, all who are profane, all who break the sabbath, all who disobey parents, all who never pray, or who say their prayers without thought, all who do not fear God, all who have not given him their hearts.

2. But in what way are children to seek Jesus Christ?

Why, they should seek him in the scriptures. Here you will learn all concerning Christ; what he has done for you; and how you may enjoy the blessings provided. Of Timothy, it is said, "From a child," &c. You should seek him by earnest prayer. Prayer is calling upon him. It is going to his throne. Of Saul of Tarsus, it was said, "Behold, he prayeth." Religion begins with prayer.

3. You must seek him by turning away from evil.

The prodigal would never have found his father had he not turned back. So you must return to God; give up all that you know is evil.

4. You must seek him by believing what he has said.

"Without faith," &c. God has said the sinner shall die. If you believe that, you will feel afraid and tremble. He has said that he does not wish the sinner to die, thus you will begin to hope. He has said that if you will trust in Christ with all your hearts, he will forgive you all your sins, and love you. This believing on Christ, is gratefully depending on what Christ has suffered for you, for acceptance with God. Now, in this seeking God, your whole heart and soul must be in earnest. If you seek him with all your hearts. But he refers us in the text to early seeking,—that is, very soon in life. You cannot seek him too early; many children have sought him so young as four or five years old

(1) You cannot seek him too early because you cannot be happy too soon. He will make you really and truly happy.

(2) Because you cannot be safe too soon. If you know good from evil, then you are accountable to God; and if you die disliking God, you cannot go to heaven, and you may die very early. I feel persuaded some of you will die while you are children. Have you not known some who have died? If you seek the Lord, then if you die young you will go to heaven,—have the crown and the white robe.

(3) It is much easier to find the Lord early; you have not gone so far from him, your evil habits are not now so strong and deep-rooted. Look at that little plant, you could pull it up; not so in a year or two. A little stream.

(4) If you find the Lord when young, God may employ you in his service, and make you very useful in the world. Who can tell what God has for you to do? Many of you may be teachers, preachers, missionaries, do much good in the world. Have you not heard of Luther, of Wesley, Cecil? and then there was the apostle John, who "leaned on Christ's bosom," &c

APPLICATION.

1. How many of you love the Lord?
2. How many will engage to seek him from this morning?

V.—HONORING GOD, DIVINELY HONORED

DESIGNED ESPECIALLY FOR YOUNG PERSONS.

"For them that honor me I will honor, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed."—1 *Sam* ii. 30.

God has inseparably connected holiness with happiness,—religion with our best interests. Sin is a service which produceth the fruit of shame and misery. Piety is productive of joy unspeakable and full of glory. "Godliness," saith the apostle, "is profitable unto all things," &c. "The way of transgressors is hard," and the wages of sin, death; but "the ways of wisdom are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace." Such is the spirit of the text. God says, "Them that honor me, I will honor," &c. In what way we inquire,

I. *Can we honor God?*

To honor is to respect, to revere, to wor

ship, exalt, or serve Now we should honor God,

1. By sacred reverence for his holy name.

"Hallowed be thy name." It is a glorious name,—a great and terrible name; never to be used lightly; not to be intermixed with common conversation,—not pronounced without awe. Sir Isaac Newton never, it is said, pronounced it without a solemn pause. Angels pronounce it with sublime emotions of veneration.

2. By a constant regard to his sacred laws.

God is our lawgiver, he has revealed his will, and his will is obligatory and binding. These laws are wise, just, and good. The basis of all acceptable obedience is faith in his Son. See John vi. 29. God's great commandment to us is, to receive his Son, as our Saviour and hope, and to honor him even as we honor the Father. Thus only do we obtain grace, by which we can serve God acceptably, with reverence and godly fear. Now just as a child honors its parents by obedient regard to their commands; and as the subject, the sovereign by loyal obedience,—so we honor God by having respect to all his commandments.

3. By a regular attendance on his public worship.

God is exalted in his sanctuary; here his glory is proclaimed,—his praises sung, his word revered. God delighteth in these assemblies. "He loveth the gates of Zion better than all the dwellings of Jacob." Now a devoted attachment, evinced by regular attendance, honors God.

4. By an avowal of religion before men.

"If any man will be my disciple," &c. Thus did Moses. Thus did Daniel, and the three Hebrews; and thus did the apostles. Not to attempt secrecy like Nicodemus, either from shame or fear.

5. By an entire consecration of all we are and have to his glory.

The glory of God is the great end of the Christian's life. It was so in Christ's life, and must be so in ours. Hence he requires that we consecrate ourselves,—our persons,—our talents,—our wealth,—our influence,—in one word—our all.

6. By unswerving adherence to the truth and service of God.

Not to swerve in prosperity, nor in poverty; in health or sickness,—in life or death. Enduring to the end,—being faithful unto death, &c. We now ask,

II. *How will God honor us?*

He will do so he has said it, explicitly and clearly,

1. By conferring the most distinguished titles.

In this way monarchs express their approbation, &c. Now when the sinner yields himself to God, he loses all the appellations of sin and misery which were upon him. Once a sinner, now a saint; a rebel, now a loyal subject; an enemy, now a child;—they are princes and priests unto God.

2. By bestowing especial marks of his favor.

He will give evidence of his love, John xiv. 23. Confer peace and joy, &c. Allow access to him at all times.

3. He will make you a blessing to others.

"I will bless," &c. See how he honored Joseph in every station. Daniel. The three Hebrews. He will bless the work of our hands.

4. By giving comfort and support in affliction and death.

To exult in prospect of dissolution. Then to have his rod and staff in the dark valley. Visions of glory as Stephen. His arms upholding while the tabernacle is being taken down. When flesh and heart fail, and when death appears, to send a convoy of angels as to Lazarus.

5. By publicly confessing and rewarding you at the last day.

Christ the judge has said that he will confess such before his father, and the holy angels. Pronounce the "well done good and faithful servants," &c. Place the sparkling diadem on the brow of his faithful servants, and give them a glorious admission into his everlasting kingdom.

APPLICATION.

1. How many present live to honor God? Do you so entirely, devotedly, fully? Is it your meat and drink to do his will? Public, domestic, and private labors. In all things.

2. Let such rejoice in the truth the text expresses. Well may you bear present adversity, scorn, persecution, suffering, &c "The suffering of the present time is not worthy to be compared with," &c.

3. How many dishonor God. Despise

aim in his Son, gospel, day, ordinances, &c. Think of the consequences! What might they have been now, but for his mercy and long-suffering. Oh think,—pause—consider,—repent,—and seek his grace.

VI.—THE SUFFERINGS OF JESUS

"Christ also suffered for us."—1 *Pet* ii. 21.

Every word in the text is important. The person spoken of is Christ; God's anointed Son; the Messiah of Israel; the salvation of the Gentiles; the joy of the earth; and the glory of heaven. That to which the text refers is deeply interesting: "He suffered." Christ's sufferings were unparalleled, and in every respect extraordinary and marvellous. Those for whom those sufferings were borne: 'For us;" us men; us sinners: but especially in their efficacious and saving power—us believers. The whole of these particulars is too comprehensive for one discourse; we shall therefore just glance at the sufferings of Christ, as presenting a mirror in which we may see our natural desert, and thus be led to view those sufferings as especially vicarious, i. e as endured for us. In these sufferings,

I. *There was the advent of Christ from a world of glory to our earth of sin and sorrow.*

In this first step Jesus must have been very painfully exercised. Behold him possessing the glory of the Father,—the glory of regal pomp and splendor,—the glory of angelic adoration and worship,—the glory of heaven's palace and temple, all elevated and pure, arrayed in his holy nature and perfections. Behold, then, the scene of his visitation: the earth, his original footstool; but not only so, but a world of pollution, guilt, blighted, cursed, &c. Think of an oriental monarch dwelling in the filthy hut of a New Zealand cannibal: yet this is nothing in comparison to the humiliation of Christ's advent into our world. He thus suffered to open a way for *us* to heaven, that men might ascend to the realms of light and glory.

II. *There was the assumption of our nature, and its eternal union with his divine glory*

We can never fathom the depths of this mystery Deity clad in human flesh· God tabernacling in humanity; "God manifest in the flesh," &c. Had the loftiest seraph assumed the form of a worm &c., this would have been the transition of a creature into the form of another creature The abasement would be great, but with Jesus the abasement was infinite immeasurable, &c. This he suffered that we might be partakers of the divine nature, and attain the adoption of sons.

III. *There was the life of adversity and humiliation which Jesus lived during his sojourning in our world.*

Invested with the reins of the universe he became poor." The child of a poor virgin; the son of a poor, hard-laboring family. Poor throughout life,—more poor than the fowls of the air, than the beasts of the field. The fowls had their nests, the sheep their fold, the foxes their holes, the fierce tiger its lair; but Christ had not where to lay his head. He borrowed his first residence and couch from the animal creation; and his sepulchre was not his own, but the property of another. If he crossed the lakes it was in other men's boats; if he entered Jerusalem as a king, the colt on which he rode was another's; and the last meal he had, was in a room borrowed by his disciples from a friend. In this we see again the insolvency in which sin had involved our world. By the treason of our transgressions we had forfeited every thing, and God might justly have withholden every bounty from us. But Christ's poverty was designed to open the treasury of the eternal riches of God's love and grace.

IV. *There was the shame, and scorn, and insults, to which Jesus submitted.*

His reputation maligned; his motives, his acts all misrepresented; his person insulted; his life hunted with hellish ferocity, &c.; his arrest; his mock trial his being clothed in the attire of a mad man; blindfolded; spit upon; the hair plucked from his cheek; long furrows ploughed upon his back. Now in all this we see the degradation and ruin which sin had brought upon man. Here we see more what depravity can transgression plunge its victims. Besides, in this we see how our spiritual and celestial glory was obtained. Man was to be raised, elevated, glorified, and therefore Christ suffered thus that we might be kings and priests unto God and the Lamb.

V. *There was the descent of God's glittering sword into the bosom of Christ, when he agonized in the garden.*

These sufferings were entirely mental and spiritual. Now he was retired from the calumniating world. Now no human hand was upon him. As yet he had not endured those corporeal inflictions to which we have referred. Yet, behold his fear. See how he trembles. His soul was seized with horror. Thick mists of darkness settle on his spirit. He falls prostrate to the ground. His agony causes him to sweat as it were great drops of blood. We feel assured these were his deepest and most intense sufferings. It was now his soul was offered up: and wherefore? That the spirits of guilty sinners might not suffer the anguish and despair of eternal wo! Oh yes! now it was he expiated and procured our deliverance from all the black horror of those doomed to the everlasting prison of the second death.

VI. *There was his ignominious and painful death upon the cross.*

Sin and death were united in the first threatening: "The wages of sin is death." Sin produced spiritual death; opened the grave for the dying body, and the regions of eternal death for the soul. Christ therefore suffered death for us, and this, in connection with his agony in the garden, constituted the atonement for sin. Thus he was the great sacrifice for transgression, and obtained eternal redemption for mankind. By his death the river of life was opened, so that its saving streams might resuscitate our guilty world. Thus, my dear friends, we have seen in several striking points wherein "Christ also hath suffered for us."

APPLICATION.

1. Have you right views of these truths?

He suffered not for himself; not for angels; not for devils; not that wicked man might be saved in sin, but that the guilty might have in him a way of approach to God's mercy and eternal life.

2. Are you personally interested?

Do you feel that you are resting your all here,—body, soul, &c.

3 Be ready to suffer for and with Christ.

"If we suffer," &c. There must be conformity between the members and the head, between the soldiers and the captain of our salvation.

VII.—TRUE BENEFICENCE.

DESIGNED FOR BENEVOLENT INSTITUTIONS.

"When the ear heard me then it blessed me and when the eye saw me it gave witness to me because I delivered the poor that cried, and the fatherless, and him that had none to help him," &c, &c.—*Job* xxix. 11–16.

Few histories are so eventful and interesting as that of Job. His career open upon us as peculiarly bright; the morning of his life was serene, cloudless, and happy. The sun of prosperity shone upon his path, and heaven and earth harmonized in promoting his prosperity. No wonder that he should exclaim, "I shall die in my nest." But it pleased God to visit him with a total reverse of circumstances. His flocks and herds are taken; his servants are slain; his sons suddenly cut off. These calamities are followed by a disease in his own person of the most afflictive kind; his friends write bitter things against him, and the wife of his bosom suggests to him, that he had better "curse God and die." How rapidly and totally did his earthly comforts flee away. Two things, however, did not fail him. A firm hope in the predicted Saviour, and a comfortable remembrance of the course of life he had pursued. His faith, even in the darkest hour, recognised his living Redeemer. "I know that my Redeemer liveth." And as to his life, he could remember how he had labored not only to enjoy the blessing of God, but also to be a blessing to those around him. "When the ear heard me," &c. Let us notice,

I. *The benevolent course he had pursued.* And,

II. *The reason why we should adopt and imitate it.*

Let us notice,

I. *The benevolent course he had pursued.*

He had mercifully regarded the sufferings of those around him. He specifies several classes of suffering which it had been his solicitude to alleviate.

1. The poor that cried.

Poverty is one of the afflictions of life, and one that is necessarily associated with pain and sorrow. Especially is this true of abject poverty Poverty that compel

ts victims to cry for relief. It is difficult for the affluent to form correct ideas of the miseries of this condition. To be hungry and have no food ; to be cold and have uncomfortable clothing ; to have a cheerless dwelling, &c. And this too often in the midst of plenty. To see around us the rich, the joyous, the affluent, rolling in profusion. It is obvious that some degree of poverty has affected the world in all ages. There are occasions, however, when it is more severe and more general. He refers,

2. To the fatherless children.

The father is expected to provide for his household. To him the children have a right to look up. But we see that fathers are sometimes taken away, and the support of dependent children therefore fails. Have not such helpless little ones a claim upon our help ? Ought we not to compassionate their condition, and stretch out the hand of kindness towards them ? They have not only temporal wants, but they have minds to be cultivated, and souls to be trained up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

3. To the disconsolate widow.

The case of the widow is always mentioned with tenderness in the holy scriptures. It is often with the widow as with the fatherless, that her earthly support is taken away, her means of livelihood removed, and she is left to stand against the storms of life solitary and single-handed. Often, too, the necessities of such are aggravated by the wicked and unprincipled conduct of persons, who will even rob the fatherless, and devour the portion of the widow. He refers,

4. To those afflicted in person.

The blind and lame are expressly mentioned in the text. In health, persons may struggle with poverty. But when lame, they lose their energy ; or when darkness beclouds their vision, what then can they do ? How greatly poverty is deepened and embittered by affliction. Personal affliction, with every comfort and with the utmost attention, is only just bearable. What is it then when wedded to poverty and want. He refers,

5. To those ready to perish.

It is truly distressing to think of our fellow-creatures perishing for want. Yet we know that this is sometimes the case. Persons do perish with hunger,—with cold,—in their afflictions,—through want of relief. Die neglected, unpitied, and unknown.

6. To such as had none to help them.

Some poor afflicted persons meet with kind friends. Others have relatives or neighbors who assist them. But there are cases where there are none to help. Persons who in their afflictions depend on the compassion of the benevolent. Often strangers who are suddenly afflicted, and who require immediate aid or they perish, " having none to help them." Let us just notice how these varied cases were treated by the godly Job.

(1) He exercised compassion of heart towards them.

He did not shut his ears or close his eyes to the miseries of those around him. He did not wrap himself in the mantle of selfish indifference. He saw, and heard, and pitied the miseries of those around him.

(2) He administered effectual relief.

" Delivered the poor." " Caused the widow's heart," &c. " Eyes to the blind," &c. He labored from this fulness to supply the need of the wretched. He did not merely say, Be fed, be clothed, be warmed. But he administered the bread and the raiment, &c. His feelings were embodied in actions of goodness and mercy.

(3) He assiduously devoted himself to works of beneficence.

" The cause which I knew not," &c He did not exercise his benevolence occasionally, or just as they came across his path, but he searched for objects of misery

This was one part of his duty, and with diligence he fervently attended to it. It is clear,

(4) That he exercised mercy and goodness with cheerful affection.

The whole passage breathes the gentle and the tender. His was not harsh-wrought and upbraiding charity ; but the soft affection, the courteous and kind overflowings of his heart. He acted willingly ; not of constraint, but of a ready mind. Now let us consider,

II. *The reasons why we should adopt the same course and imitate his example.*

1. There are the sympathies of our common humanity.

God has formed us for the exercise of kindness and compassion. He has planted

these feelings in our hearts. He has so constituted us that the sight or hearing of suffering produces an immediate effect on our souls. This is common to man as man; to the savage as well as the philosopher. To shut up our bowels of compassion is to do violence to the principles of our humanity.

2. There are the laws of righteousness. One of the commandments of God is, hat we are to love our neighbor, &c. And Christ has taught us the extent of that love in the parable of the Good Samaritan. Jehovah demands this from us. It is a moral exaction. Disobedience is therefore scriptural immorality.

3. There are the higher claims of Christian goodness.

We are under the dispensation of mercy. Ours is a religion of love. Christ is our teacher and example. Under the law God made great provision for the poor and the stranger. Jesus embodied goodness and mercy, and exhibited them in every part of his life. He was the friend of the poor and the solace of the distressed.

4. There are the dignities and pleasures arising from it.

The text speaks of it as a *robe* and a *diadem*. It is the most beautiful and dignified garment in which we can be clothed. It is the celestial garment of love, and the diadem of mercy. But it is also essentially connected with pleasure. True pleasure. The loftiest and finest of our nature. That which angels have, &c. That which God enjoys. The richest and sweetest felicity we can have on earth. It is so often, too, n the *retrospect*. Was it not so to Job? He could look back and remember this with pleasure.

5. There are connected with it many great and precious promises.

Let us look at two or three,—Psalm xli. 1–3; Isaiah lviii. 16, &c. "Blessed are the merciful," &c. Christ will acknowledge every act of goodness to the poor as though done to himself. He has said, "The poor cannot recompense you, but ye shall be recompensed in the resurrection of the just."

APPLICATION.

1. Have we exhibited any of the spirit of Job?

Do we in the least degree experimentally know the meaning of the text?

2. Let our beneficence be wisely and prudently administered.

3. Remember our need of God's constant goodness to us.

Both in body and soul.

4. Goodness is the fruit, not the basis of piety.

VIII.—THE BIRTH OF JESUS.

INTENDED FOR CHRISTMAS DAY.

"And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord."—*Luke* ii. 10, 11

THE subject of the text is the nativity of the world's Redeemer; an event of a most astonishing and glorious description; an unprecedented event; an event which only occurred once within the history of the world. Every thing concerning Jesus is matter of delightful contemplation to the Christian. His name is as precious ointment poured forth. Let us, then, with humble views of grateful delight direct our meditations to the nativity of the Son of God. In doing this we shall confine our thoughts to the text. We have,

I. *The messenger employed.*

"The angel of the Lord." More probably one of the most exalted of all the cherubic hosts. One of the dignified sons of light. One of those who witnessed the creation of our world, and who with his holy companions, as morning stars, sang together, when all the sons of God shouted for joy. An ambassador from heaven to earth; from God to man. A service of unrivalled glory and benevolence; calculated to excite wonder and abundant praise. By the redemption which is in Christ angels become our brethren, our friends, and our companions forever. It is probable their joys and honors are greatly advanced by the work of the Messiah.

II. *The persons addressed.*

Jewish shepherds, ver. 8, 9. This is decisive evidence that the incarnation did not take place in December, but rather in September or October. After the beginning of October the weather was too cold for the flocks in the mountainous region of Bethlehem. What a contrast between the ambassador and those to whom he appeared. How different, too, to he doings of men

and to human expectations. It would have been supposed, the tidings should have been given to kings, or philosophers, or assuredly to the priests, &c. "But God's ways," &c. In all the works and life of Christ God poured contempt upon worldly glory and distinctions. In his parentage, &c.; in his condition of life; in his disciples, &c.; in his chief followers. God has especially honored the calling of shepherds; Abel, Jacob, Moses, David, and many of the prophets. Notice,

III. *The message communicated.*

Now the angel not only stated this but affixed to it, "I bring you," &c. These tidings are the birth of the Saviour.

1. He describes his person.

(1) Saviour; Christ; Lord His errand, work, and object was to save; to redeem men; to ransom the lost world. He was typified, predicted, promised, &c. as a Saviour. Not a temporal but spiritual; not a Saviour of men from earthly bondage, &c., but a Saviour of souls from eternal death to eternal glory.

(2) Christ. The same with Messias: that is, the Anointed One. One sent, commissioned, and qualified by Jehovah. The ancient kings and priests were anointed with oil, &c. Christ with the Holy Ghost without measure.

(3) The Lord. Here is the dignity, power, and glory of this Saviour. "A virgin shall conceive," &c. "Unto us a child is born," &c. "God manifest in the flesh," &c.

2. He announces his birth.

"Is born," &c. Not promised; not prophesied afresh. Prophecies had ceased, &c. The scene of types has ended. Now the event. The long prayed and longed for event. The years accomplished. The fulness of the times. The place, too, according to prediction. Micah v. 2.

3. He affirms this to be an event of good tidings, &c.

Tidings of divine grace and salvation. All other tidings insignificant. A physician for a sick world. A Redeemer. Tidings of light, of life, of happiness, and of eternal glory. "*Good* tidings of great joy."

4. He notices the universal application of these good tidings

"You." The Jews, &c first. Yes; Christ was emphatically their Saviour, he was of their seed; he lived, &c. with them. But "*all people*." How cheering to the Gentiles. All the Gentiles. "All people." How vast the comprehension; how universal. Wherever we find even a horde of wandering savages Christ is born for them. All people. All classes, countries, ages, &c.

APPLICATION.

1. Is the end of Christ's birth answered in you?

Is he yours indeed?

2. If so rejoice.

Let it be spiritual, holy, constant, and then it will be eternal.

3 Caution against the evils of the season

IX.—A NEW YEAR'S FRIENDLY INTERROGATION.

"Is it well with thee? Is it well with thy husband? Is it well with the child? And she answered, It is well."—2 *Kings* iv. 26.

Our subject takes us back to the time of the prophet Elisha. The holy prophet of God often had to pass in his journeys through a place called Shunem. In this place dwelt a distinguished woman, doubtless, a true servant of the God of Israel. Observing the prophet, she made him welcome to the hospitalities of her house. The prophet's journeys being frequent, she at length said to her husband, "Behold, now I perceive," &c., ver. 9. Think of a prophet's accommodation, &c. Elisha, grateful for the kindness proposed, said to Gehazi, his servant, &c., ver. 12. Her noble answer exhibited satisfaction and contentment with her lot. How worthy of our imitation. "Godliness with contentment is great gain." God favored this good woman, who had been childless, with a son. This son was the object of peculiar affection. He must have lived at least for some years. At length, however, the child died,—died suddenly, ver. 18. Her affliction was great,—the blessing given suddenly snatched away. Observe the course she adopted, ver. 22. Elisha witnesses her approach, and sends Gehazi to meet her with the interrogations of the text. The text exhibits resignation and submission under a very dark and trying dispensation. God's government must be always well; his dispensations are all mercy and truth.

But to feel this and confess it, and act accordingly, is difficult, but not impossible. But we leave the original occurrences of the text to dwell on the interrogation, "Is it well with thee?" We apply the text to the soul,—to that thinking principle which is endowed with conciousness, and which bears the impress of immortality. Is it well with your souls?

I. *Let me assist you to answer the question.*

"Is it well with thee?"

1. If so, it is different with you now to what it once was.

It cannot be well with the person who is in his natural unconverted state. It cannot be well for the soul to be in darkness, in disease, in guilt, in fetters, under sentence of death, exposed to everlasting ruin. Now, this is the state of every person who is not changed by the grace of God. This was the state of every believer before they knew the grace of God in truth. Have you passed from death unto life? Have you been brought up out of the horrible pit, &c.? Have you been plucked as a brand, &c.? Can you say, I, even I have obtained mercy. If it is well with you,

2. You are the children of God's family.

Look at the prodigal famishing, ready to perish; look at him then clothed, with the ring of reconciliation, at the festive board. Every believer is a child of God. He resembles God. He loves God. He fears God. He serves God. If it is well with you,

3. You have an interest in the precious promises.

Word of God full of these; for body and soul, time and eternity; they refer to every possible condition, and ensure every blessing we can possibly need. "Hereby are given unto us great and precious promises," &c. With these we are rich and ough to be happy—without them, we are wretched and poor. If it is well with you,

4. You have a sure title, and a bright hope of a better world.

Some persons never think of another world,—care not, &c. Death is a step in the dark. The Christian knows by the conviction of faith in God's word that there is a better world. He acts upon the direction of the gospel; embraces the offer of God's grace; and confidently hopes and looks. Looking for the blessed hope, &c. 'Rejoice not in this that the devils are subject," &c. "I know whom I have believed," &c. "For we know if this the earthly house," &c. If it is well with you

5. You are glorifying God in the world

It cannot be well with the misanthrope —such a one as Cain. With the slothful who labor not in their vocation, &c. With those who do no good; shed no influence abroad; remove no sorrow; diffuse no bliss. It is well with the active, useful, liberal Christian.

II. *Let me urge the question upon a variety of characters present.*

1. Professors, is it well with you?

Is your profession the title-page to the contents of your hearts? Have you the root of the matter? Have you a pacified conscience? Are you bearing fruit? Is it increasingly well with you? Are you truly the better for your religion, and is religion greatly bettered by you?

2. Young persons, is well with you? Do you fear God in youth? Do you cleanse your way, by taking heed unto God's word? Do you avoid evil company? Do you flee the scenes of folly and dissipation? Have you given your hearts to God? Do you daily pray, "My Father, be thou the guide of my youth?"

3. Parents, is it well with you?

Have you a strong impregnable wall round your families? Is the God of Israel your defence? Have you his blessing on your substance? Is God supreme ruler? Have you an altar,—is the voice of prayer heard?

4. My aged friends, is it well with you?

As the outward man decays, &c. Do you bring forth fruit to old age? What is your conversation, experience, influence? Are you ripening for heaven? Are you sailing close to the shores of glory?

5. Inquirers, is it well with you?

Oh, you say, we wish it were,—you are mourning, distressed, &c. Well, it is well with you,—God says so. "Blessed are they that mourn," &c. "To that man will I look," &c. Was it not well with the publican, the woman who was a sinner, &c.

6. Careless sinner, is it well with you?

It cannot be, "Say unto the wicked, it shall be ill," &c. It is not now, and it must be worse and worse. But it may be well with you. "If you repent," &c.

IN CONCLUSION,

1. Let each ask the question, Is it well

with my soul? Well in real experience? Well for the next world?

2. We cannot settle this question with absolute certainty for others. We are not called to judge. Examine thyself. Prove thyself, &c. Carnal people cannot judge.

3. Let our course be to please God, and then it must be well with us forever.

X.—HEAVEN THE COUNTRY OF THE CHRISTIAN'S DESIRE

DESIGNED FOR FUNERAL SERVICES.

"But now they desire a better country; that is, an heavenly."—*Heb.* xi. 16.

THE apostle, having referred to the heroic faith and holy lives of several of the Old Testament saints, then pronounces the manner in which they finished their earthly course. "These all died in faith." This had been their mode of life; they lived by faith, and when they came to the close of life, still they had not received the promise, neither the entire possession of Canaan, or the promised Messiah, but they were unshaken in their belief in death. As the troubles of life could not move them from the foundation on which they rested, neither could the waters of death. "They died in faith." And as to the influence of faith on the general tenor of spirit and conversation, it is said they considered "themselves strangers." For had they sought to return to their native land, the country of Mesopotamia, they might easily have done so. But they preferred being strangers and pilgrims, because "they desired a better country," &c. Let us take a brief survey,

I. *Of the revelation concerning heaven.*

II. *In what respects it is a better country.*

III. *The desire which all true believers ave for its possession.*

I. *Of the revelation concerning heaven.*

We wish to dwell emphatically on the word revelation, because what can we know of a future state except what is revealed? Human imagination may sketch a heaven, but then it is only ideal, and therefore not that which hope can appropriate to itself. Mahomet has promised his followers a heaven, but such a one as he knew would fascinate the oriental sensualist. Now the scriptures reveal,

1. A heavenly place.

This place they call by a variety of significant appellations. Habitation of God God's right hand. Glory. Our Father's house. The new Jerusalem. The city of God. Paradise. We presume not to say where it is, but it is doubtless in the most exalted and glorious part of God's universe. It is represented as being upward; Christ ascended to it. Paul was caught up into the third heavens. Now in this place God has his palace,—his throne —his temple,—his servants,—his worshippers. But mark, the scriptures reveal it chiefly,

2. As a state.

As the state of the glorified spirits who dwell with God; worship him incessantly; enjoy the rivers of pleasure which are at his right hand for evermore. It is represented as a state of rest from toil, as triumph after warfare; of glory after suffering; of life after death; of honor, and immortality, and endless bliss. But these points will be more appropriate, when we view the subject comparatively.

II. *In what respects is it a better country than this?*

1. It is a sinless country.

How beautiful and fair was this earth when God expressed his perfect approbation, and pronounced it very good. Sin defaced and marred it. Sin converted it into the region of wo, and the shadow of death. Sin diffused ruin through every part of it. Now, that better country is sinless, the plague-spot of sin is not within all its borders. The streams are all pure; the sky is cloudless and radiant; the air unimpregnated with pollution. In all that country God has his own bright image reflected. Not one spirit devoted to the service of the evil one. The refulgent rays of the divine holiness spread through all the extent of that better land. How different to this world.

2. It is a healthful country.

Sickness is the fruit of sin. Pain the offspring of iniquity. Could we be borne on the wings of some heavenly intelligence to every hospital, infirmary, and afflicted chamber, what should we see and hear? Afflictions abound among all classes of men,—in the palace of the monarch as well as in the cottage of the peasant. The wasting consumption, the burning inflammation, the raging fever, the suffocating asthma, with a fearful train of ills and pains, storming every part of the citadel of man

The heavenly atmosphere is untainted. Not a disease is incidental to that better world. The air is salubrious; the enjoyments without peril; the food incorruptible; and therefore sickness is unknown.

3. It is a country inhabited by perfect beings.

The perfect and blessed God. The perfect and blessed Mediator. The perfect and holy angels. The spirits of the perfected saints. Not one imperfect being within the celestial range. Now to speak more especially of the redeemed saints,—they are all entirely holy. How different that country to this.

(1) Let us look without the church, and there is the ungodly world. Hating God and hating his people. Persecuting, bitter, malignant tongues. Devouring spirits, ravenous as wild beasts; hateful and hating as demons. Not an envious person,—not a detractor, or evil speaker,—not a calumniator,—not one person with an evil heart or evil tongue.

(2) No imperfect brethren. Here we are often distressed through the infirmities of our fellow disciples: one is possessed of an uninformed understanding; another an unsound judgment; a third, a stubborn disposition; a fourth, a wayward or hasty temper; and in many things we all offend. There the inhabitants will have clear, unclouded understandings; true, and righteous, and hallowed judgments; hearts full of celestial love, and spirits of courtesy, gentleness, and meekness. Then that which is imperfect shall be done away, and every inhabitant contribute to the peace and happiness of the whole. Nothing shall hurt or vex in all God's holy mountain.

4. It is a country of better enjoyments.

This world is full of God's goodness, but the richer blessings are above. Besides, here our enjoyments,

(1) Will be overflowing. Here only a sip, a gleam, a taste: there an ocean, noonday light, and an eternal banquet.

(2) Will be incessant. Here interrupted; there ever joyous. Here like angels visits, &c.; there continuous; a rolling sea of glory; pleasures which have no interruption.

(3) Eternal. Perpetuity of bliss is bliss. Death terminates all earthly enjoyments: but the terms, age, infirmity, suffering, death, are nowhere to be found in the vocabulary of heaven. There time is not, that is, duration measured; all is eternity: no night, but endless day; no death, but eternal life. What a country! How it should attract us, &c.

III. *The desire which all true believers have for its possession.*

Others may wish, but the true Christian really desires it. This desire,

1. Is formed in regeneration.

Born for and from above. New nature tends upward.

2. Is cultivated by sanctifying grace.

Growing in grace is growing in meetness, &c.

3. Is heightened by spiritual visits to it.

He ascends in prayer,—in faith,—in hope. "Oh that I had wings like a dove," &c.

4. Is exhibited in holy diligence to obtain it.

He labors to enter; he gives all diligence.

APPLICATION.

1. This better country is offered to all who will set out on the heavenly pilgrimage. Who then will begin the holy journey?

2. How truly blest are all the children of the heavenly Zion. Now on their way to the land of rest,—to their Father's house,—to endless glory. How cheerful they should be. "Yea, and before we rise to that immortal state," &c.

3. There is a worse country, the world of wo, of darkness, of despair, of endless death. Flee from it, and now.

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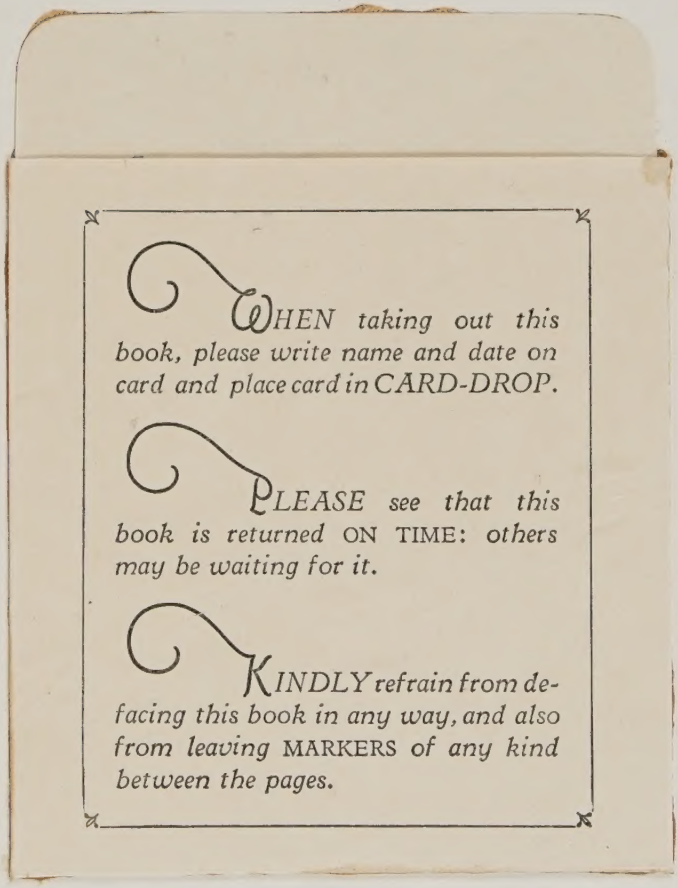
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